

OF
Sincerity *and* Constancy
IN THE
Faith and Profession

OF THE
TRUE RELIGION,

In Several

SERMONS.

By the Most Reverend
Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON.
Late Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury.

Published from the Originals,
By *Ralph Barker*, D.-D. Chaplain to his Grace.

L O N D O N,

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IMPRIMATUR,

Febr. 16.
1697.

Tho. Cantuar.

TO HIS
SACRED MAJESTY,
King William,

THESE
SERMONS

ARE

Most humbly Dedicated,

By the Author's Relict,

Elizabeth Tillotson.

TO HIS
SACRED MAJESTY

King William

THESE
SERMONS

A R E

Most humbly Dedicated,

By the Author, Richard

Elizabeth Toller

THE
PUBLISHER
TO THE
READER.

THE AUTHOR of these Sermons was so well known, particularly for his most Excellent and Useful Discourses from the Pulpit, that I shall not attempt, by any thing I can say, to recommend them to the Publick. I know very well, they have already that Credit in the World, which will render any Apologie needless; especially when by this Publication of them, they shall speak for themselves.

I think it requisite, only to assure the Reader, That they are what they

The P R E F A C E.

pretend to be, the genuine Works of that great Man.

Whilst I had the Happiness of Conversing with him, he was pleas'd (at my Request) to instruct me in the Character in which he wrote all his Sermons ; and some of these now Published, having been Transcrib'd by me some Years since, were found amongst his Papers, Corrected with his own Hand.

By what he had been pleas'd to say, that I was Master of his Character, and by the few Errata he observ'd in my first Performance, I was encouraged to set about this Work ; in which I can Solemnly Profess, that I have observ'd a Religious care and strictness, neither to omit nor add any thing, but an of, a the, or the like, when the Sense plainly requir'd it ; and of that too I have given notice, by affixing this Mark ["] upon the Word which I did not

The P R E F A C E.

not find in the Original ; so that the Reader is left to judge of the fitness of such Additions ; which, after all, are so very few and inconsiderable, as scarcely to deserve this notice ; only that he might be satisfied (in case the Printer do his part) that he hath here, what he expects, a perfect Transcript of these Sermons ; and in them a true and lively strain of Christian Piety and Eloquence, so fitted to all Capacities, that I cannot but hope, all that shall read them will be the better for them, even those not excepted (if there be any such) who may have entertain'd any unreasonable Prejudices against them, or their most Reverend Author.

I have alwaies thought, and often said it, that if any were Leaven'd with Prejudice against Him, they were, to be sure, such as did not know him ; and the farther I go in his Writings, the more I am assur'd,
that

THE PREFACE

that it must be found. But because the
Sermons themselves, to which I refer,
are not yet all of them Published, I
must leave this to the Judgment of the
Impartial Reader, when the whole
shall be finish'd, which is design'd with
all convenient speed.

Lambeth
April 2. 1695.

Ra. Barker.

THE

THE
SERMONS
TEXTS

OF EACH
SERMON
IN THIS
VOLUME.

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A

THE COURT

now sitting at the Court House
in the City of New York

IN SENATE

And certified that the
true and correct copy of the

A
S E R M O N

Preached at

K I N G S T O N,

July 29. 1694.

The last his GRACE Preached.

J O H N I. 47.

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him,
and saith of him, Behold an
Israelite indeed; in whom is no
guile.*

WH O this *Nathanael* was, upon
whom our Saviour bestows
this extraordinary Character,
doth not certainly appear, his Name
A being

being but once more mention'd in the whole History of the Gospel: For certain, he was a good Man, who deserved this extraordinary Commendation; and none but our Saviour, who knew what was in Man, and needed not that any should tell him, could have given it, especially of one, whom he had never seen before that time; for when Jesus saw him coming to him, he saith of him *Behold an Israelite indeed.*

The whole Nation of the *Jews* were *Israelites*, by Natural Descent, being the Seed of *Jacob*, or *Israel*; but in a special, and more excellent sense, none are esteemed the true Posterity of *Israel*, but those, who resembled this Father of their Nation, in true Piety, and Goodness; for (as the Apostle reasons) they are not all *Israel*, who are of *Israel*; they only are *Israelites* indeed, who resemble good Old *Jacob*, in the sincerity of his Piety, and the simplicity of his Temper, and Disposition; for our Saviour seems here to allude to that Character which is given of *Jacob* (Gen. 25. 27.) *That he was a plain Man*, or as the Hebrew word signifies, a perfect and sincere Man, in opposition to his Brother *Esau*, who is said to be cunning; so that to be an *Israelite*,

He indeed, is to be a downright honest Man, without fraud, and guile, without any arts of hypocrisie and deceit.

In speaking of this vertue of Sincerity, which is the highest Character and Commendation of a good Man, I shall consider it, as it respects God, and Man. As it respects God, so it imports the truth and sincerity of our Piety and Devotion towards him. As it regards Men, so it signifies a simplicity of Mind and Manners, in our Carriage and Conversation, one towards another; both these are included, and very probably were intended, in the Character which our Saviour here gives of *Nathanael*.

I. I shall consider this Grace, or Vertue of sincerity, as it respects God; and so it imports the truth and sincerity of our Piety toward him, that we heartily believe, and fear, and honour him, and that the outward expressions of our Piety and Obedience to him, are the genuine issue of our inward apprehensions of him, and affections towards him; and this no doubt our Saviour intended in the first place in the Character of this good Man, that he was a Man of a real and substantial and unaffected Piety, and in truth,

The First Sermon.

what he appeared to be ; that he did sincerely love God, and his Truth, and was ready to embrace it, whenever it was fairly proposed to him, as did plainly appear in his Carriage towards our Saviour ; for when *Philip* invited him to come and see him, he did not conceal the prejudice and objection he had against him, grounded upon a common, but uncharitable Proverb, *That out of Nazareth ariseth no Prophet*, but having an honest and sincere mind, he was not so carried away by a popular prejudice, as not to have patience to be better informed, and therefore was easily persuaded to go and see our Saviour, and to discourse with him himself, and being satisfied that he was the *Messias*, he presently owns him for such, calling him the Son of God, and the King of *Israel* ; and because sincerity is the very heart and substance of Religion, it concerns us not only to endeavour after this temper and disposition, but to enquire into the nature and properties of it, that we may know when we have it, and may have the comfort of it. I shall mention five or six Properties of a sincere Piety, by which Men may sufficiently know the

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the integrity of their hearts towards God.

1. Our Piety is then sincere when the chief reasons and predominant motives of it are Religious ; and I call that a Religious or rational motive, which regards God, and another World, in opposition to Men, and to our present temporal Advantages ; when the principal and swaying motives of our Piety, are a sense of God's Authority over us, and of our Duty and Obligation to him ; a fear of his Displeasure and Threatnings, and the hopes of the Glorious Reward which he hath promised to Obedience ; these motives are properly Religious, because they respect God, and are the Arguments to Obedience, which he himself offers to us, to perswade us to our Duty ; and that is a sincere Piety, which is wrought in us by these Considerations, how unequally soever mixed ; for even in the most of Men Fear does many times prevail more than Love, and in case of great temptation, may preserve Men from sin, when perhaps no other consideration will do it. On the contrary, that is an unsincere Piety, to which we are moved, meerly by the regard of Men, and the consideration of some

temporal Advantages ; and when these have the chief influence upon us, it is easie for any Man to discern in himself ; for he that will carefully observe himself, can hardly be ignorant of the true spring and motive of his own actions ; but there is one sign, whereby a Man may certainly know that his heart is not right towards God, and that is, if when these motives are absent, our Piety and Zeal for the true Religion doth either cease, or be sensibly cooled and abated, as if Impiety, or Popery, or any thing else that is bad, begin to be in fashion, and to have the Countenance of great Examples ; if those whom we fear, and upon whom we depend, do discover any inclination that way, if the garb of Religion cease to be for our interest, or in the revolution of things, happen to be contrary to it ; if in any of these cases, we let fall the profession of our Religion, or neglect the practice of it, this is a plain, and undeniable demonstration of the insincerity of our former Piety.

2. A sincere Piety must be rooted in the heart, and be a living principle within us ; for as the Apostle reasons in another case, *he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he who is one inwardly*, and in the heart ;

heart; and without this all outward acts of Piety and Devotion, are hypocrisie, a picture of Religion and a form of Godliness, without the life and power of it.

3. A Third Evidence of a sincere Piety is, when Men are Religious in private and in secret, as well as in publick and in the open view of Men; he is truly devout, who is so in his Family, and in his Closet, where he hath no Witness; but God, and his own Soul, as well as in the Church; he is a downright honest Man, who will make good his Word, and perform his Promise (when no proof can be made of it, and no Law compel him to it) as readily as if there had been an hundred Witnesses of it; he is sincerely just, who will not detain from another his right, though he be ignorant of it, nor wrong any Man, tho' he could do it with all the secrecy and safety in the World; who will not impose upon anothers ignorance or unskillfulness, tho never so much to his own benefit and advantage; he is truly Charitable, who would not only as soon, but rather sooner give his Alms in secret, than in the sight of Men; and he is truly grateful, who when there is occasion

and opportunity, will acknowledge a kindness and requite a benefit to the Relations of his Deceased Friend, though he be sure that all memory of the Obligation dyed with him, and that none are conscious to it, but God and his own Conscience : And indeed there is scarce any act of Piety, and Vertue, the sincerity of which may not by this evidence be known to us : As on the contrary a Man may for certain conclude himself a Hypocrite, if he be not the same, in the presence of God, and his own Conscience that he is in the sight of Men.

4. Another Evidence of a sincere Piety is a constant tenour of goodness in the general course of our Lives : I do not now speak of the first beginnings of Piety, in new Converts, which are many times very imperfect, and such as afford little or no evidence of a Man's sincerity; but in those who have made any considerable progress in goodness; the habits of any known sin, and the wilful and deliberate neglect of our Duties, and even the single acts of more hainous Crimes, will bring in question our sincerity, and are by no means to be sheltered under the name of infirmity; for these the Grace of
God,

God, if we be not wanting to our selves, will inable us to subdue ; and he is not sincerely good, who doth not seriously endeavour to be as good as he can, and does not make use of that Grace which God is ready to afford to all the purposes, (though not of a perfect, yet) of a sincere obedience to the Laws of God.

5. Another Evidence of a sincere Piety is, that our obedience to God be uniform and universal, equally respecting all the Laws of God, and every part of our Duty ; that it do not content it self with an especial regard to some Precepts of the Law, though never so considerable, and allow it self in the breach, or neglect of the rest ; no nor with observing the Duties of one Table of the Law, if it overlook the other, no nor with obedience to all the Commandments of God, one only excepted. St. James puts this case, and determines, *That he that keeps the whole Law, saving that he offends in one point, is guilty of all,* that is, is not sincere in his obedience to the rest ; and therefore we must take great heed, that we do not set the Commandments of God at odds, and dash the two Tables of the Law, against one another, lest as St. James says, we break
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the whole Law : And yet I fear this is too common a fault, even amongst those who make a great profession of Piety, that they are not sufficiently sensible of the obligation and necessity of the Duties of the second Table, and of the excellency of those Graces, and Vertues, which respect our Carriage and Conversation with one another: Men do not seem to consider, that God did not give Laws to us, for his own sake, but ours ; and therefore that he did not only design that we should Honour him, but that we should be happy in one another ; for which reason, he joyns with our humble and dutiful Deportment towards himself, the Offices of Justice and Charity towards others, Mich. 6. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?* And 1 John 4. 21. *This Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also.* And yet it is too visible that many, who make a great profession of Piety towards God, are very defective in Moral Duties ; very unpeaceable, and turbulent in their Spirits, very peevish and passionate, very conceited and censorious, as if their
pro-

profession of Godliness did exempt them from the care and practice of Christian Vertues: But we must not so fix our eye upon Heaven, as to forget that we walk upon the Earth, and to neglect the ordering of our steps and Conversation among Men, lest while we are gazing upon the Stars, we fall into the Ditch of gross and foul Immorality.

It is very possible, that Men may be devout and zealous in Religion, very nice, and scrupulous about the Worship and Service of God, and yet because of their palpable defect in points of Justice and Honesty, of Meekness and Humility, of Peace and Charity, may be gross and odious Hypocrites; for Men must not think for some acts, either of outward or inward Piety, to compound with God for the neglect of Mercy and Judgment, or to demand it as a right from Men to be excused from the great Duties and Vertues of Humane Conversation; or pretend to be above them, because they relate chiefly to this World, and to the temporal happiness of Men; as if it were the privilege of great Devotion, to give a license to Men to be peevish and froward, sower and morose, supercilious

clious and censorious in their behaviour towards others: Men must have a great care, that they be not intent upon the outward parts of Religion, to the prejudice of inward and real goodness, and that they do not so use the means of Religion, as to neglect and lose the main end of it; that they do not place all Religion in Fasting and outward Mortification; for though these things be very useful and necessary in their place, if they be discreetly managed, and made subservient to the great ends of Religion; yet it is often seen that Men have so unequal a respect to the several parts of their Duty, that Fasting and Corporal severity, those meager and lean Duties of Piety, in comparison, do *like Pharaoh's lean kine devour and eat up almost all the goodly and well-favoured*, the great and substantial Duties of the Christian Life; and therefore Men must take great heed, lest whilst they are so intent upon mortifying themselves, they do not mortifie Vertue and good Nature, Humility and Meekness and Charity, things highly valuable in themselves and amiable in the eyes of Men, and in the sight of God of great price.

For

For the neglect of the Moral Duties of the second Table is not only a mighty scandal to Religion, but of pernicious consequence many other ways: A fierce and ill governed, an ignorant and injudicious Zeal for the Honour of God, and something or other belonging necessarily, as they think, to his true Worship and Service, hath made many Men do many unreasonable, immoral and impious things, of which History will furnish us with innumerable instances, in the practice of the Jesuits, and other Zealots of the Church of *Rome*; and there are not wanting too many examples of this kind amongst our selves; for Men that are not sober, and considerate in their Religion, but give themselves up to the conduct of blind prejudice, and furious zeal, do easily perswade themselves, that any thing is lawful, which they strongly fancy to tend to the Honour of God, and to the advancement of the cause of Religion; hence some have proceeded to that height of absurdity, in their Zeal for their Religion and Church, as to think it not only lawful, but highly commendable and meritorious, to equivocate upon Oath, and break Faith with Hereticks, and to destroy all those that differ

differ from them; as if it were Piety in some cases, to lie for the Truth, and to kill Men for God's sake.

So that if we would approve the integrity of our hearts to God, and evidence to our selves the sincerity of our Obedience, we ought impartially to regard all the Laws of God, and every part of our Duty; and if we do not, our heart is not upright with God: 'Tis observable that sincerity in Scripture is often call'd by the name of Integrity, and Perfection, because it is integrated, and made up of all the parts of our Duty.

6. The last evidence I shall mention of the sincerity of our Religion is, if it hold out against persecution, and endure the fiery tryal; this is the utmost proof of our integrity, when we are called to bear the Cross, to be willing then to expose all our worldly interest, and even life it self, for the Cause of God, and Religion; this is a tryal which God doth not always call his faithful Servants to, but they are always to be prepared for it, in the purpose and resolution of their minds; this our Saviour makes the great mark of a true Disciple, *if any man (saith he) will be my disciple,*
let

let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me ; this is a certain sign, that Men have received the word into good ground, and are well rooted in their Religion, when they are not shaken by these fierce assaults ; for many (as our Saviour tells us) hear the word, and with joy receive it, but having not root in themselves, they endure but for a while, and when persecution, or tribulation ariseth, because of the word, presently they are offended ; nay, some when they see persecution coming at a distance, wheel off, and bethink themselves of making their retreat in time, and of agreeing with their adversary whilst he is yet in the way.

So that constancy to our Religion in case of danger, and suffering for it, is the best proof of our sincerity : This is the fiery tryal, as the Scripture calls it, which will try what materials we are made of, and whether we love God and his truth in sincerity.

And thus I have considered sincerity as it respects God, and imports true Piety and Religion towards him ; and I proceed to the second consideration

II. Of sincerity as it regards Men, and so it signifies a simplicity of mind and manners in our conversation, and carriage one towards another, singleness of Heart, discovering itself in a constant plainness and honest openness of behaviour, free from all insidious devises, and little tricks, and fetches of Craft and Cunning; from all false appearances and deceitful disguises of our selves in word or action; or yet more plainly, it is to speak as we think, and do what we pretend and profess, to perform and make good what we promise, and in a word, really to be, what we would seem and appear to be.

Not that we are obliged to tell every Man all our mind, but we are never to declare any thing contrary to it; we may be silent, and conceal as much of our selves, as prudence, or any other good reason requires; but we must not put on a disguise, and make a false appearance and empty show, of what we are not, either by word or action. Contrary to this Vertue is (I fear) most of that compliment, which is current in conversation, and which for the most part is nothing but words, to fill up the
Gaps,

Caps, and supply the emptiness of Discourse, and a pretence to that kindness and esteem for persons, which either in truth we have not, or not to that degree which our expressions seem to import, which if done with design, is that which we call Flattery, a very odious sort of Insincerity; and so much the worse, because it abuseth Men into a vain, and foolish opinion of themselves, and an ill grounded confidence of the kindness and good-will of others towards them; and so much the more dangerous, because it hath a party within us, which is ready to let it in; it plays upon our self-love, which greedily catcheth at any thing that tends to magnifie and advance us; for God knows, we are all too apt to think and make the best of our bad selves, so that very few Tempers have Wisdom and firmness enough to be proof against Flattery; it requires great Consideration, and a resolute Modesty and Humility to resist the Insinuations of this Serpent; yea, a little rudeness and moroseness of Nature, a prudent distrust and infidelity in Mankind to make a Man in good earnest to reject and despise it.

Now besides that all Hypocrisie and Insincerity is mean in it self, having falsehood at the bottom, it is also often made use of, to the prejudice of others, in their Rights and Interests; for not only Dissimulation is contrary to Sincerity, because it consists in a vain shew of what we are not, in a false muster of our Virtues and good Qualities, in a deceitful representation and undue Character of our Lives; but there are likewise other Qualities and Actions more inconsistent with Integrity, which are of a more injurious and mischievous consequence to our nature, as falshood, and fraud, and perfidiousness, and infinite little Crafts and arts of deceit, which Men practise upon one another in their ordinary conversation and intercourse; the former is great vanity, but this is gross iniquity.

And yet these Qualities dexterously managed, so as not to lie too plain and open to discovery, are look'd upon by many, as signs of great depth and shrewdness, admirable instruments of business, and necessary means for the compassing our own ends and designs; and though in those that have suffered by them, and felt the mischief of them, they are always accounted dishonest, yet among the

the generality of lookers on, they pass for great policy, as if the very skill of governing and managing humane affairs, did consist in these little tricks and devices: But he that looks more narrowly into them, and will but have the patience to observe the end of them, will find them to be great follies, and that it is only for want of true wisdom and understanding, that Men *turn aside to tricks, and make dissimulation and lies their refuge.* It is Solomon's Observation, *That he that walketh uprightly walketh surely, but the folly of Fools is deceit:* The folly of Fools, that is, the most egregious piece of folly that any Man can be guilty of, is to play the Knave; the vulgar Translation renders this clause a little otherwise, but yet towards the same sense, *Sed stultus divertit ad dolos*, but the Fool turns aside to tricks; to make use of these, is a sign the Man wants understanding to see the plain and direct way to his end: I will not deny but these little Arts may serve a present turn, and perhaps successfully enough, but true Wisdom goes deep, and reacheth a great way further, looking to the end of things and regarding the future as well as the present, and by judging upon the whole matter and sum.

of affairs, doth clearly discern, that Craft and Cunning are only useful for the present occasion, whereas Integrity is of a lasting use, and will be serviceable to us upon all occasions, and in the whole course of our Lives; and that Dissimulation and Deceit, though they may do some present execution in business, yet they recoil upon a Man terribly afterwards, so as to make him stagger, and by degrees to weaken, and at last to destroy his Reputation, which is a much more useful and substantial and lasting instrument of prosperity and success in humane affairs than any tricks and devices whatsoever. Thus have I considered this great vertue of Sincerity, both as it regards God, and the mutual conversation and intercourse of Men one with another.

And now having explained the nature of Sincerity to God and Man, by declaring the properties of it, and in what instances we ought chiefly to practise it, and what things are contrary to it; that which now remains, is to perswade Men to endeavour after this excellent quality, and to practise it in all the words and actions of their Lives.

Let us then in the first place be sincere in our Religion, and serve God in truth and uprightness of heart out of Conscience of our Duty and Obligations to him, and not with sinister respects to our private interest or passion, to the publick approbation or censure of Men; let us never make use of Religion to serve any base and unworthy ends, cloaking our designs of Covetousness, or Ambition, or Revenge, with pretences of Conscience and Zeal for God; and let us endeavour after the reality of Religion, always remembering that a sincere Piety doth not consist in shew, but substance, not in appearance, but in effect; that the Spirit of true Religion is still and calm, charitable and peaceable, making as little shew and stir as is possible; that a truly and sincerely good Man does not affect vain Ostentation, and an unseasonable discovery of his good Qualities, but endeavours rather really to be, than to seem Religious; and of the two rather seeks to conceal his Piety than to set it out with pomp; gives his Alms privately, prays to God in secret, and makes no appearance of Religion but in such fruits and effects as cannot be hid; in the quiet and silent vertues of Humility, and Meekness,

ness, and Patience, of Peace and Charity ; in governing his Passions, and taking heed not to offend with his Tongue by slander and calumny, by envious detraction, or rash censure, or by any word or action that may be to the hurt and prejudice of his Neighbour : But on the contrary, it is a very ill sign if a Man affect to make a great noise and bustle about Religion, if he blow a Trumpet before his good Works, and by extraordinary shews of Devotion summon the Eyes of Men to behold him, and do, as it were, call aloud to them to take notice of his Piety, and to *come to see his zeal for the Lord of Hosts* : It is not impossible but such a Man with all his vanity and ostentation may have some real goodness in him ; but he is as the Hypocrites are, and does as like one as is possible ; and by the mighty shew that he makes to wise and considerate Men, greatly brings in question the sincerity of his Religion.

And with the sincerity of our Piety towards God, let us joyn the simplicity and integrity of Manners in our Conversation with Men ; let us strictly charge our selves to use truth and plainness in all our words and doings ; let our Tongue

be ever the true Interpreter of our Mind, and our Expressions the lively Image of our Thoughts and Affections, and our outward actions exactly agreeable to our inward purposes and intentions.

Amongst too many other Instances of the great corruption and degeneracy of the Age wherein we live, the great and general want of sincerity in Conversation is none of the least; the World is grown so full of Dissimulation and Complement, that Mens words are hardly any signification of their thoughts; and if any Man measure his words by his heart, and speak as he thinks, and do not express more kindness to every man than men usually have for any man, he can hardly escape the censure of rudeness and want of breeding: The old *English* plainness and sincerity, that generous integrity of Nature and honesty of Disposition which always argues true greatness of mind, and is usually accompanied with undaunted courage and resolution, is in a great measure lost amongst us; there hath been a long endeavour to transform us into foreign Manners and Fashions, and to bring us to a servile imitation of none of the best of our Neighbours in

some of the worst of their Qualities : The Dialect of Conversation is now a-days so swell'd with Vanity and Complement, and so surfeited (as I may say) of expressions of kindness and respect, that if a man that lived an Age or two ago should return into the World again, he would really want a Dictionary to help him to understand his own Language, and to know the true intrinsick value of the phrase in fashion, and would hardly at first believe at what a low rate the highest strains and expressions of kindness imaginable do commonly pass in currant payment ; and when he should come to understand it, it would be a great while before he could bring himself, with a good Countenance and a good Conscience to converse with Men upon equal terms and in their own way.

And in truth it is hard to say whether it should more provoke our contempt or our pity to hear what solemn expressions of respect and kindness will pass between men, almost upon no occasion ; how great honour and esteem they will declare for one whom perhaps they never heard of or saw before, and how entirely they are all on the sudden devoted to his service and interest for no reason ; how
infinitely

infinitely and eternally obliged to him for no benefit, and how extremely they will be concerned for him, yea, and afflicted too for no cause. I know it is said in justification of this hollow kind of Conversation, that there is no harm, no real deceit in Complement, but the matter is well enough so long as we understand one another, *Et verba valent ut Nummi*, Words are like Money, and when the current value of them is generally understood, no Man is cheated by them; this is something if such words were any thing, but being brought into the Account they are meer Cyphers. However it is still a just matter of complaint, that sincerity and plainness are out of fashion, and that our Language is running into a Lye; that Men have almost quite perverted the use of Speech, and made words to signifie nothing; that the greatest part of the Conversation of Mankind, and of their intercourse with one another, is little else but driving a Trade of Dissimulation, insomuch that it would make a Man heartily sick and weary of the World, to see the little sincerity that is in use and practice among Men, and tempt him to break out into that melancholy Complaint and Wish of
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the Prophet (Jer. 9.) O that I had in the Wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people and go from them; for they are all Adulterers, and an assembly of treacherous Men; and they bend their tongue like their bow for lies, but have no courage for the truth upon earth. Take ye heed every one of his Neighbour, and trust ye not in any Brother; for every Brother will utterly supplant, and every Neighbour will walk with slanders. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; one speaketh peaceably to his Neighbour, but in his heart he lieth in wait: Shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord; and shall not my Soul be avenged of such a Nation as this?

Such were the Manners of the people of *Israel* at that time, which were both the forerunner and the cause of those terrible Calamities which befell them afterwards; and this Character agrees but too well to the present Age, which is so wretchedly void of Truth and Sincerity, for which reason there is the greater need to recommend this Virtue to us, which seems to be fled from us, that truth and righteousness may return, and glory may dwell in our land, and God may show his mercy upon us and grant

us his Salvation, and Righteousness and Peace may kiss each other. To this end give me leave to offer these following Considerations.

First, That Sincerity is the highest commendation and the very best Character, that can be given of any man; it is the solid foundation of all Virtue, the Heart and Soul of all Piety and Goodness; it is in Scripture called perfection, and frequently joyned with it; and throughout the Bible, there is the greatest stress and weight laid upon it; it is spoken of as the sum and comprehension of all Religion: *Only fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth*, says *Joshua* to the people of *Israel*, (*Jos. 24. 14.*) God takes great pleasure in it; so *David* assures us, (*1 Chron. 29. 17.*) *I know my God that thou tryest the Heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness*: And again, *Thou lovest truth in the inward parts*.

To this disposition of mind the promises of divine favour and blessing are particularly made, *Psal. 15. 1, 2.* *Lord who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh*

speaketh the truth from his Heart. Psal. 32. 2. Blessed is the Man, unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose Spirit there is no guil.

And 'tis observable that this Character of our Saviour here given of *Nathaniel*, is the only full and perfect commendation that we read was ever given by him of any particular person. He commends some particular acts of Piety and Virtue in others, as *St. Peter's* confession of him, the Faith of the *Centurion*, and of the Woman that was healed by touching the Hem of his Garment, the Charity of the Woman that cast her two Mites into the Treasury, and the Bounty of that other devout Woman who poured upon him a Box of precious Oyntment: But here he gives the particular Character of a good Man when he says of *Nathaniel* that he was an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no Guil: And the Apostle mentions this quality, as the chief ingredient into the Character of the best Man that ever was, our blessed Saviour, *who did no Sin, neither was Guil found in his mouth.*

Secondly, The rarity of this Virtue is a farther commendation of it. A sincerely

cerely pious and good Man, without any guil or disguise is not a sight to be seen every day: Our Saviour in the Text, speaks of it, as a thing very extraordinary and of special remark and observation, and breaks out into some kind of wonder upon the occasion, as if to see a Man of perfect integrity and simplicity were an occurrence very rare and unusual, and such as calls for our more especial attention and regard, *Behold* (saith he) *an Israelite indeed in whom there is no Guil.*

Thirdly, The want of Sincerity will quite spoil the virtue and acceptance of all our Piety and Obedience, and certainly deprive us of the reward of it: All that we doe in the service of God, all our external obedience to his Laws, if not animated by Sincerity, is like a Sacrifice without a Heart, which is an abomination to the Lord.

Fourthly, Hypocrisy and Insincerity is a very vain and foolish thing; it is designed to cheat others, but is in truth a deceiving of our selves: No Man would flatter or dissemble, did he believe he were seen and discover'd; an open Knave
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is a great Fool, who destroys at once both his design and his Reputation; and this is the case of every Hypocrite; all the disagreement which is between his Tongue and his Thoughts, his Actions and his Heart, is open to that Eye, from which nothing can be hid; *for the ways of Man are before the Eyes of the Lord, and he seeth all his goings; there is no darkness nor shadow of Death where the workers of Iniquity may hide themselves.*

Fifthly, Truth and Reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more; if the shew of any thing be good for any thing, I am sure Sincerity is better; for why does any man dissemble, or seem to be that which he is not, but because he thinks it good to have such a quality as he pretends to? for to counterfeit and dissemble, is to put on the appearance of some real excellency: Now the best way in the world for a man to seem to be any thing, is really to be what he would seem to be: Besides, that it is many times as troublesome to make good the pretence of a good quality, as to have it; and if a man have it not, it is ten to one, but he is discovered to want it, and then all his pains
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and labour to seem to have it is lost. There is something unnatural in Painting, which a skilful Eye will easily discern from native Beauty and Complexion.

It is hard to personate and act a part long; for where truth is not at the bottom, nature will always be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray herself one time or other; therefore if any man think it convenient to seem Good, let him be so indeed, and then his Goodness will appear to every body's satisfaction; for Truth is convincing and carries it's own light and evidence along with it, and will not only commend us to every Man's Conscience, but, which is much more, to God, who searcheth and seeth our Hearts; so that upon all accounts Sincerity is true Wisdom: Particularly as to the affairs of this World Integrity hath many advantages over all the fine and artificial ways of Dissimulation and Deceit; it is much the plainer and easier, much the safer and more secure way of dealing in the world; it hath less of trouble and difficulty, of entanglement and perplexity, of danger and hazard in it; it is the shortest and nearest way to our end, carrying
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us thither in a straight line, and will hold out and last longest. The Arts of Deceit and Cunning do continually grow weaker and less effectual and serviceable to them that use them, whereas Integrity gains strength by use, and the more and longer any Man practiseth it, the greater service it does him, by confirming his Reputation, and encouraging those with whom he hath to do, to repose the greater Trust and Confidence in him, which is an unspeakable advantage in the business and affairs of life.

But a Dissembler must always be upon his guard and watch himself carefully, that he doth not contradict his own pretence, for he acts an unnatural part, and therefore must put a continual force and restraint upon himself. Truth alwayes lies uppermost, and if a Man do not carefully attend, he will be apt to bolt it out : Whereas he that acts sincerely, hath the easiest task in the world, because he follows Nature, and so is put to no trouble and care about his words and actions ; he needs not invent any pretences beforehand, nor make excuses afterwards for any thing he hath said or done.

But Insincerity is very troublesome to manage ; a Man hath so many things to attend

tend to; so many ends to bring together, as make his life a very perplex and intricate thing: *Oportet mendacem esse memorem*; A lyar had need have a good memory, lest he contradict at one time what he said at another; but Truth is always consistent with it self, and needs nothing to help it out; it is always near at hand, and sits upon our Lips, and is ready to drop out before we are aware, whereas a Lye is troublesome and sets a Mans invention upon the Rack, and one trick needs a great many more to make it good: It is like building upon a false Foundation, which continually stands in need of props to shoar it up, and proves at last more chargable, than to have raised a substantial Building at first upon a true and solid Foundation; for Sincerity is firm and substantial, and there is nothing hollow and unsound in it, and because it is plain and open, fears no discovery; of which the Crafty Man is always in danger, and when he thinks he walks in the dark, all his pretences are so transparent, that he that runs may read them; he is the last Man that finds himself to be found out, and whilst he takes it for granted that he makes Fools of others, he renders himself ridiculous.

Add to all this, that Sincerity is the most compendious Wisdom, and an excellent instrument for the speedy dispatch of Business ; it creates confidence in those we have to deal with, saves the labour of many enquiries, and brings things to an issue in few words: It is like travelling in a plain beaten Road, which commonly brings a Man sooner to his Journeys end, than By-ways in which Men often lose themselves. In a word, whatsoever convenience may be thought to be in falshood and dissimulation, it is soon over ; but the inconvenience of it is perpetual, because it brings a Man under an everlasting jealousy and suspicion , so that he is not believed when he speaks truth, nor trusted when perhaps he means honestly : When a Man hath once forfeited the reputation of his Integrity, he is set fast, and nothing will then serve his turn, neither Truth nor Falshood.

And I have often thought, that God hath in great Wisdom hid from Men of false and dishonest minds the wonderful advantages of Truth and Integrity to the prosperity even of our worldly Affairs; these Men are so blinded by their Covetousness and Ambition, that they cannot look beyond a present advantage, nor
forbear

forbear to seize upon it, tho by ways never so indirect : They cannot see so far, as to the remote Consequences of a steady Integrity, and the vast benefit and advantages which it will bring a Man at last. Were but this sort of Men wise and clear-sighted enough to discern this, they would be honest, out of very Knavery, not out of any love to Honesty and Vertue, but with a crafty design to promote and advance more effectually their own Interests; and therefore the Justice of the Divine Providence hath hid this truest point of Wisdom from their Eyes, that bad men might not be upon equal Terms with the Just and Upright, and serve their own wicked Designs by honest and lawful means.

Indeed, if a man were only to deal in the world for a day, and should never have occasion to converse more with Mankind; never more need their good opinion, or good Word, it were then no great matter (speaking as to the concerns of this world) if a man spent his Reputation all at once, and ventured it at one throw ; but if he be to continue in the world, and would have the advantage of Conversation whilst he is in it, let him make use of Truth and Sincerity in all his Words and

Actions, for nothing but this will last and hold out to the end ; all other Arts will fail, but Truth and Integrity will carry a man through, and bear him out to the last.

'Tis the Observation of *Solomon* (Prov. 12. 19.) *The lip of Truth is established, for ever, but a lying Tongue is but for a moment.* And the wiser any man is, the more clearly will he discern, how serviceable Sincerity is to all the great ends and purposes of humane life ; and that man hath made a good progress, and profited much in the School of Wisdom, who valueth Truth and Sincerity according to their worth : Every man will readily grant them to be great Vertues and Arguments of a generous mind ; but that there is so much of true Wisdom in them, and that they really serve to profit our interest in this World seems a great Paradox to the generality of Men, and yet I doubt not but it is undoubtedly true, and generally found to be so, in the experience of Mankind.

Lastly, Consider that it is not worth our while to dissemble, considering the shortness and especially the uncertainty of our Lives. To what purpose should we be so cunning, when our abode in this world

world is so short and uncertain? Why should any man by dissembling his Judgment, or acting contrary to it, incur at once the displeasure of God, and the discontent of his own mind? Especially if we consider, that all our Dissimulation shall one day be made manifest and published on the open Theatre of the World, before God Angels and Men, to our everlasting Shame and Confusion; all Disguise and Vizards shall then be pluckt off, and every man shall appear in his true Colours. *For then the Secrets of Men shall be judged, and God will bring every Work into Judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil. Nothing is now covered, which shall not then be revealed, nor hid which shall not then be known.*

Let us then be now what we would be glad to be found in that day, when all pretences shall be examined, and the closest Hypocrisie of Men shall be laid open and dashed out of Countenance; when the Secrets of all Hearts shall be disclosed, and all the hidden Works of Darkness shall be revealed, and all our Thoughts, Words and Actions shall be brought to a strict and severe Tryal, and be censured by that impartial and infalli-

The First Sermon:

ble Judgment of God, which is according to Truth: *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ,*

To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be Glory now and for ever. Amen.

A
S E R M O N

Preached at

W H I T E - H A L L
M D C L X X X V I .

Before the

Princess A N N .

H E B . X I . 17, 18, 19.

By Faith Abraham when he was Tryed offered up Isaac : And he that had received the Promises offered up his only begotten Son ; Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy Seed be called : Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the Dead ; From whence also he received him in a Figure.

THE design of this Epistle to the Hebrews , is to recommend to them the Christian Religion, to which
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they were but newly Converted, and to encourage them to Constancy in the profession of it, notwithstanding the Sufferings which attended it. He sets before them in this Chapter several examples in the Old Testament of those, (who tho' they were under a much more imperfect dispensation) yet by a stedfast belief in God and his promises, had performed such wonderful acts of Obedience and Self-denial.

He begins with the Patriarchs before the Flood, but insists chiefly upon the examples of two eminent Persons of their own Nation, as nearest to them, and most likely to prevail upon them, the Examples of *Abraham* and *Moses*, the one the Father of their Nation, the other their great Lawgiver, and both of them the greatest Patterns of Faith, and Obedience, and Self-denial, that the History of all former Ages, from the beginning of the World, had afforded.

I shall at this time, by God's assistance, treat of the first of these, the Example of *Abraham*, the Constancy of whose Faith, and the cheerfulness of whose Obedience, even in the difficultest Cases, is so remarkable above all the other Examples mentioned in this Chapter. For at the Com-
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mand of God, he left his Kindred and his Country, not knowing whither he should go.

By which eminent Act of Obedience, he declared himself to be wholly at God's Disposal, and ready to follow him: But this was no tryal in comparison of that here in my Text, when God commanded him to offer up his only Son.

But such was the immutable stedfastness of his Faith, and the perfect submission of his Obedience, that it does not appear that he made the least check at it; but out of perfect Reverence and Obedience to the Authority of the divine Command, he went about it as readily and cheerfully, as if God had bid him do some small thing: *By Faith Abraham when he was tryed offered up Isaac.*

For the explication of which Words, it will be requisite to consider two things.

First, The Tryal or Temptation in general.

Secondly, The Excellency of Abraham's Faith and Obedience upon this Tryal.

First, The Tryal or Temptation in general: It is said that *Abraham when he was tryed*, the word is *πειρασθῆναι*, being Tempted: That is, God intending to

to make Tryal of his Faith and Obedience; and so it is exprest *Gen. 22. 1.* Where it is said, that God did Tempt *Abraham*, and said unto him, take now thy Son, thine only Son.

Now there are two difficulties concerning this matter: It seems contrary to Scripture, that God should Tempt any Man; and contrary to Reason, because God who knows what every Man will do, needed not to make tryal of any Man's Faith or Obedience.

First, It seems contrary to Scripture, which say's, *God Tempts no Man*: and 'tis most true, that God Tempts no Man, with a design to draw him into Sin; but this doth not hinder, but he may try their Faith and Obedience with great difficulties, to make them the more illustrious. Thus God Tempted *Abraham*; and he permitted *Job*, and even our Blessed Saviour himself to be thus Tempted.

Secondly, It seems contrary to Reason, that God, who knows what any Man will do in any Circumstances, should go to make Tryal of it. But God does not try Men for his own information, but to give an illustrious Proof and Example to others of Faith and Obedience: And tho after this Tryal of *Abraham*, God
says

says to him, *now I know that thou lovest me, because thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me; Yet we are to understand this as spoken after the manner of Men; As God elsewhere speaks to Abraham concerning Sodom; I will go down now to see whether they have done altogether according to the cry which is come up unto me, and if not, I will know.*

I proceed to the Second thing I proposed, The Excellency of Abraham's Faith and Obedience upon this Tryal: By Faith Abraham when he was tryed offered up Isaac. God accepts of it, as if he had done it, because he had done it in part, and was ready to have performed the rest, if God had not countermanded him.

And this act of Faith and Obedience in Abraham will appear the more illustrious, if we consider these three things.

First, The firmness and steadfastness of his Faith, notwithstanding the objections against it.

Secondly, The constancy of his resolution, notwithstanding the difficulty of the thing.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The reasonableness of his Faith, in that he gave satisfaction to himself in so hard and perplext a Case.

First, The firmness and stedfastness of his Faith will appear, if we consider what objections there were in the case, enough to shake a very strong Faith. There were three great objections against this Command, and such as might in reason make a wise and good Man doubtful whether this Command were from God.

The horrid nature of the thing commanded.

The grievous scandal that might seem almost unavoidably to follow upon it.

And the horrible consequence of it, which seemed to make the former promise of God to *Abraham* void.

First, the horrid nature of the thing commanded, which was for a Father to kill his own Child; this must needs appear very barbarous and unnatural, and look liker a Sacrifice to an Idol, than to the true God.

It seemed to be against the Law of Nature, and directly contrary to that kindness and affection which God himself had planted in the hearts of Parents towards their Children.

And

And there is no affection more natural and strong than this, for there are many persons that would redeem the Lives of their Children with the hazard of their own. Now that God hath planted such an affection in Nature, is an argument that it is good, and therefore it could not but seem strange that he should command any thing contrary to it: And in this case, there were two circumstances that increased the horreur of the fact; That his Son was innocent; and that he was to Slay him with his own hands.

First, That his Son was Innocent. It would grieve the heart of any Father to give up his Son to Death, tho he were never so undutiful and disobedient.

So passionately was *David* affected with the death of his Son *Absolem*, as to wish he had dyed for him, tho he dyed in the very act of Rebellion, and tho the saving of his Life had been inconsistent with the Peace of his Government.

How deep then must it sink into the heart of a Father to give up his innocent Son to death? And such a Son was *Isaac*, for any thing appeared to the contrary. God himself gave him this testimony

testimony, that he was the Son whom his Father loved, and there is no intimation of any thing to the contrary : Now this could not but appear strange to a good Man, that God should command an innocent person to be put to death. But, *Secondly*,

That a Father should be commanded, not only to give up his Son to death, but to slay him with his own Hands; not only to be a Spectator, but to be the Actor in this Tragedy ; What Father would not shrink, and start back at such a Command ? What good Man, especially in such a case, and where Nature was so hard prest, would not have been apt to have looked upon such a Revelation as this, rather as the suggestion and illusion of an evil Spirit, than a Command of God ? And yet *Abraham's* Faith was not staggered, so as to call this Revelation of God in question.

Secondly, The grievous scandal that might seem almost unavoidably to follow upon it, was another great objection against it ; the report of such an action would in all appearance blemish the reputation, even of so good a Man, amongst all sober and considerate persons

sons, who could hardly forbear to censure him, as a wicked and unnatural Man.

And this was a hard case, for a Man to be put to Sacrifice at once, two of the dearest things in the world, his Reputation and his Son; nor could he have easily defended himself from this imputation, by alledging an express Revelation and Command of God for it; for who would give credit to it?

A Revelation to another Man is nothing to me, unless I be assured that he had such a Revelation, which I cannot be, but either by another immediate revelation, or by some Miracle to confirm it.

The act had an appearance of so much horror, that it was not easily credible that God should command it; and if every Mans confident pretence to revelation be admitted, the worst actions may plead this in their excuse.

So that this pretence would have been so far from excusing his fault, that it must rather have been esteemed a high aggravation of it, by adding the boldest Impiety to the most barbarous Inhumanity. But *Abraham* was not stumbled at this, nor at the advantage which the Enemies of his Religion would make of such

such an occasion, who would be ready to say, *Here is your excellent good Man, and likely to be a Friend of God, who was so cruel an Enemy to his own Son.* All this 'tis probable he might consider, but it did not move him, being resolved to obey God, and to leave it to his Wisdom to provide against all the inconveniencies that might follow upon it.

Thirdly, The strongest Objection of all, was the horrible consequence of the thing, which seemed to clash with former Revelations, and to make void the promise which God had before made to Abraham, *That in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed,* which promise was expressly limited to Isaac and his Posterity, who had then no Son.

And of this difficulty the Apostle takes express notice in the Text, *that he that had received the promises* (that is, was persuaded of the truth and faithfulness of them) *offered up his only begotten Son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy Seed be called.*

And this Objection is really so strong, that if Abraham could not have given himself satisfaction about it, he might justly

justly have questioned the truth of the Revelation ; for no Man can possibly entertain two contradictory Revelations, as from God, but he must of necessity question one or both of them ; but so strong was *Abraham's* Faith, as not to be shaken by the seeming contradiction of these two Revelations.

II. We will consider the constancy of his Resolution to obey God, notwithstanding the harshness and difficulty of the thing. Tho *Abraham* were firmly persuaded that this Command to kill his Son, was really from God ; yet it is no easie matter for a Man to bring himself to obey God in so difficult a case, and out of meer reverence to the Divine Authority, to divest himself of his Nature, and to thwart the strongest inclinations of it ; a Man would be very apt to confer with flesh and blood in such a case. Let but any Man that knows what it is to be a Father, lay his hand upon his heart and consider his own Bowels, and he will be astonished at *Abraham's* Obedience as well as his Faith.

To take his Son, his only Son, his Son whom he loved, and in whom he placed all his hopes of a happy Posterity,

ty, and with his own hands to destroy him and all his hopes together; it must be a strong Faith that will engage a Man to Obedience in so difficult an instance.

There is one circumstance more especially, which renders *Abraham's* Obedience very remarkable; The deliberateness of the action. It had not been so much, if so soon as he had received this Command from God, he had upon a suddain impulse and transport of zeal done this.

But that his Obedience might be the more glorious, and have all the circumstances of advantage given to it, God would have it done deliberately, and upon full consideration; and therefore he bad him go to the Mountain three daies Journey from the place where he was, and there to offer up his Son.

It is in acts of Virtue and Obedience, as in acts of Sin and Vice; the more deliberate the Sin is, and the more calm and sedate temper the Man is in when he commits it, the greater is the fault; whereas what is done by surprize, in the heat of Temptation or transport of Passion, hath some excuse from the suddainness and indeliberateness of it.

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So is it in acts of Virtue and Obedience, especially if they be attended with considerable difficulty, the more deliberately they are done, the more virtuous they are, and the greater praise is due to them.

Now that *Abraham's* Obedience might want nothing to highten it, God seems on purpose to have put so long a space betwixt the Command and the performance of it ; he gives him time to cool upon it ; to weigh the command, and to look on every side of this difficult duty ; he gives scope for his reason to argue and debate the case, and opportunity for natural affection to play its part ; and for flesh and blood to raise all its batteries against the resolution which he had taken up.

And now we may easily imagin, what conflict this good Man had within himself, during those three daies that he was travelling to the Mountain in *Moriab*; and how his heart was ready to be rent in pieces, betwixt his duty to God, and his affection to his Child ; so that every step of this unwelcome and wearisome journey, he did as it were lay violent hands upon himself.

He was to offer up his Son but *once*, but he Sacrificed himself and his own Will every moment for three days together; and when he came thither, and all things were ready, the Altar, the Wood, and the Fire, and the Knife, it must needs be a stabbing Question, and wound him to the Heart, which his Innocent Son so innocently askt him, *Where is the Lamb, for a Burnt-Offering?*

It must be a strong Faith indeed, and a mighty Resolution, that could make him to hold out three days against the violent Assaults of his own Nature, and the charming Presence of his Son, enough to melt his Heart, as often as he cast his Eyes upon him; and yet nothing of all this, made him to stagger in his Duty, but *being strong in Faith, he gave glory to God*, by one of the most miraculous acts of Obedience that ever was exacted from any of the Sons of Men.

III. In the *Third* and last place, I come to consider the Reasonableness of his Faith, in that he was able to give satisfaction to himself in so intricate and perplext a case. The constancy of *Abraham's* Faith, was not an obstinate and stubborn Persuasion,

suasion; but the result of the wisest reasoning, and soberest consideration.

So the Text says, that he counted (the word is *λογισάμενος* he Reasoned with himself) that God was able to raise him up from the Dead; so that he debated the matter with himself, and gave himself satisfaction, concerning the Objections and Difficulties in the case; and being fully satisfied that it was a Divine Command, he resolved to obey it.

As for the *Objections* I have mentioned.

1. The horrid appearance of the thing, that a Father should Slay his Innocent Son. Why should *Abraham* scruple the doing this, at the Command of God, who being the Author of Life, hath power over it, and may resume what he hath given, and take away the Life of any of his Creatures when he will, and make whom he pleaseth instruments in the execution of his Command?

It was indeed a hard case, considering natural affection; and therefore God did not permit it to be executed.

But the question of God's Right over the lives of Men; and of his authority to command any Man to be the instru-

ment of his pleasure in such a case, admits of no dispute.

And tho God hath planted strong affections in Parents towards their Children; yet he hath written no Law in any Man's heart, to the prejudice of his own Sovereign Right: This is a case alwaies excepted, and this takes away the objection of Injustice.

2. As to the scandal of it, that could be no great objection in those times, when the absolute power of Parents over their Children was in it's full force, and they might put them to Death without being accountable for it.

So that then it was no such startling matter, to hear of a Father putting his Child to Death; nay, in much later times we find that in the most ancient Laws of the *Romans* (I mean those of the *12 Tables*) Children are absolutely put in the power of their Parents, to whom is given, *jus vita & necis*, a power of Life and Death over them; and likewise to sell them for Slaves.

And tho amongst the *Jews* this paternal power was limited by the Law of *Moses*; and the judgment of Life and Death was taken out of the Fathers hands, except in case of Contumacy and Rebel-

Rebellion; (and even in that case the Process was to be before the Elders of the City) yet it is certain, that in elder times the paternal power was more absolute and unaccountable, which takes off much from the horror and scandal of the thing, as it appears now to us who have no such power.

And therefore we do not find in the History, that this Objection did much stick with *Abraham*: It being then no unusual thing for a Father to put his Child to Death, upon a just account.

And the Command of God, who hath absolute Dominion over the Lives of his Creatures, is certainly a just reason; and no Man can reasonably scruple the doing of that, upon the Command of God, which he might have done by his own Authority, without being accountable for the Action, to any but God only.

3. As to the Objection from the horrible consequence of the thing Commanded, that the Slaying of *Isaac* seemed to overthrow the Promise, which God had made before to *Abraham*, That in *Isaac* his Seed should be called: This seems to him to be the great difficulty, and here he makes use of Reason,

to reconcile the seeming Contradiction of this Command of God, to his former Promise. So the Text tells us, that *he offered up his only begotten Son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac, shall thy Seed be called; Reasoning that God was able to raise him up from the Dead.* So that tho' Isaac were put to Death, yet he saw how the Promise of God might still be made good by his being raised from the Dead, and living afterwards to have a numerous Posterity.

There had then indeed been no Instance, or Example of any such thing in the World, as the Resurrection of one from the Dead, which makes *Abraham's* Faith the more wonderful, but he confirmed himself in this Belief, by an Example as near the case as might be. *He Reasoned, that God was able to raise him from the Dead, from whence also he had received him in a Figure.*

This I know is by Interpreters generally understood of *Isaac's* being delivered from the Jaws of Death, when he was laid upon the Altar, and ready to be Slain. But the Text seems not to speak of what happend after, but of something that had passed before: By which *Abraham* confirmed himself in this
per-

pertuasion, that if he were Slain, God would raise him up again.

And so the words *ἵνα ἐκστασίου* ought to be rendred, in the past time, *from whence also he had received him, in a Figure.* So that this Expression plainly refers to the miraculous Birth of Isaac, when his Parents were past the Age of having Children; which was little less than a Resurrection from the Dead.

And so the Scripture speaks of it. *Rom. 4. 17. Abraham believed God, who quickeneth the Dead, and calleth the things which are not, as if they were, and not being weak in Faith, he considered not his own Body which was Dead; and a little before the Text, (speaking of the miraculous Birth of Isaac) and therefore sprang there of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the Stars of Heaven.*

From whence (as the Apostle tells us) *Abraham Reasoned thus; That God who gave him Isaac at first, in so miraculous a manner, was able by another miracle to restore him to life again, after he was Dead, and to make him the Father of many Nations. He Reasoned, that God was able to raise him up from the Dead, from whence also he had received him in a Figure.*

Thus

Thus you see the reasonableness of *Abraham's* Faith ; he pitched upon the main difficulty in the Case, and he answered it, as well as was possible : And in his reasoning about this matter, he gives the utmost weight to every thing, that might tend to vindicate the Truth and faithfulness of God's Promise, and to make the Revelations of God consistent with one another ; and this tho' he had a great Interest, and a very tender concernment of his own, to have biased him.

For he might have argued with great appearance and probability the other way: But as every Pious and Good Man should do, he reasoned on God's side, and favoured that part. Rather than disobey a Command of God, or believe that his promise should be frustrate, he will believe any thing that is credible and possible, how improbable soever. Thus far Faith will go, but no farther : From the believing of plain Contradictions and Impossibilities, it always desires to be excused.

Thus much for explication of the Words ; which I hope hath not been altogether unprofitable, because it tends to clear a point which hath something of difficulty and obscurity in it, and to vindi-

vindicate the Holy Scripture, and the Divine Revelation therein contained, from one of the most specious Objections of Infidelity.

But I had a farther design in this Text; And that is to make some *Observations* and *Inferences* from it, that may be of use to us. As

First, That Humane Nature is capable of clear and full satisfaction, concerning a Divine Revelation; for if *Abraham* had not been fully and past all doubt assured that this was a Command from God, he would certainly have spared his Son. And nothing is more reasonable, than to believe that those to whom God is pleased to make immediate Revelations of his Will, are some way or other assured that they are Divine, otherwise they would be in vain, and to no purpose.

But how Men are assured concerning Divine Revelations made to them, is not so easy to make out to others: Only these two things we are sure of.

1. That God can work in the Mind of Man, a firm persuasion of the Truth of what he Reveals, and that such a Revelation is from him. This no Man can doubt of, that considers the
great

great power and influence which God, who made us, and perfectly knows our Frame, must needs have upon our Minds and Understandings.

2. That God never offers any thing to any Man's belief, that plainly contradicts the Natural and Essential Notions of his Mind. Because this would be for God to destroy his own Workmanship, and to impose that upon the understanding of Man, which whilst it remains what it is, it cannot possibly admit.

For instance, We cannot imagin, that God should Reveal to any Man any thing, that plainly contradicts the Essential Perfections of the Divine Nature; for such a Revelation can no more be supposed to be from God, than a Revelation from God, that there is no God; which is a downright Contradiction.

Now to apply this to the Revelation, which God made to *Abraham* concerning the Sacrificing of his Son. This was made to him by an audible Voice, and he was fully satisfied by the Evidence which it carried along with it, that it was from God.

For

For this was not the first of many Revelations that had been made to him, so that he knew the manner of them, and had found by manifold experience, that he was not deceived, and upon this experience, was grown to a great Confidence in the Truth and Goodness of God. And it is very probable, the first time God appeared to *Abraham*, because it was a new thing, that to make way for the credit of future Revelations, God did shew himself to him in so glorious a manner, as was abundantly to his Conviction.

And this *St. Stephen* does seem to intimate *Acts 7. 2.* *The God of glory appeared to our Father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia.* Now by this glorious Appearance of God to him at first, he was so, prepared for the Entertainment of after Revelations, that he was not staggered even at this, concerning the Sacrificing of his Son, being both by the manner of it, and the assurance that accompanied it, fully satisfied that it was from God.

Secondly, I observe from hence the great and necessary use of Reason, in matters of Faith. For we see here that

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Abraham's Reason, was a mighty strengthening and help to his Faith. Here were two Revelations made to *Abraham*, which seemed to clash with one another; and if *Abraham's Reason* could not have reconciled the Repugnancy of them, he could not possibly have believed them both to be from God; because this natural Notion, or Principle, *that God cannot contradict himself*, every Man does first, and more firmly believe, than any Revelation whatsoever.

Now *Abraham's Reason* relieved him in this strait; so the Text expressly tells us, *that he reasoned with himself, that God was able to raise him from the Dead.*

And this being admitted, the Command of God, concerning the Slaying of *Isaac*, was very well consistent with his former Promise, *That in Isaac his Seed should be called.*

I know there hath a very rude clamour been raised by some persons, (but of more Zeal I think than Judgment) against the use of Reason in matters of Faith; but how very unreasonable this is, will appear to any one that will but have patience to consider these following particulars:

i. The

1. The nature of Divine Revelation:

That it doth not endow Men with new Faculties; but propoundeth new Objects to the Faculties, which they had before. Reason is the Faculty whereby Revelation is to be discerned; for when God reveals any thing to us, he reveals it to our Understanding, and by that we are to judge of it: Therefore St. *John* cautions us 1 *Jo.* 4. 1. *Not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world:* That is, there are many that falsely pretend to Inspiration; but how can these pretenders be tryed and discerned from those that are truly inspired, but by using our Reason, in comparing the evidence for the one and the other?

2. This will farther appear, if we consider the nature of Faith. Faith (as we are now speaking of it) is an assent of the Mind to something as revealed by God: Now all assent must be grounded upon evidence, that is, no Man can believe any thing, unless he have, or thinks he hath some reason to do so. For to be confident of a thing without reason, is not Faith, but a presumptuous persuasion, and obstinacy of mind.

3. This

3. This will yet be more evident, if we consider the method, that must of necessity be used to convince any Man of the truth of Religion. Suppose we had to deal with one that is a Stranger, and Enemy to Christianity, What means are proper to be used to gain him over to it? The most natural method surely were this, to acquaint him with the Holy Scriptures, which are the Rule of our Faith and Practice. He would ask us, *why we believe that Book?* The proper answer would be, *because it is the Word of God;* this he could not but acknowledge to be a very good reason, if it were true: But then he would ask, *Why we believed it to be the Word of God, rather than Mahomet's Alchoran, which pretends no less to be of divine Inspiration.*

If any Man now should answer, *that he could give no reason why he believed it to be the word of God, only he believed it to be so, and so every man else ought to do, without enquiring after any further reason, because reason is to be laid a side in matters of Faith;* would not the Man presently reply, *that he had just as much reason as this comes to, to believe the Alchoran, or any thing else;* that is none at all?

But certainly the better way would be, to satisfy this Man's reason, by proper arguments; that the Scriptures are a divine Revelation, and that no other Book in the world can with equal reason pretend to be so; and if this be a good way, then we do and must call in the assistance of reason for the proof of our Religion.

4. Let it be considered farther, that the highest commendations that are given in Scripture to any ones Faith, are given upon account of the reasonableness of it. *Abraham's* Faith is famous, and made a pattern to all generations; because he reasoned himself into it, notwithstanding the objections to the contrary; and he did not blindly break through these objections, and wink hard at them, but he look'd them in the face, and gave himself reasonable satisfaction concerning them.

The *Centurian's* Faith is commended by our Saviour, *Math. 8. 11.* Because when his Servant was sick, he did not desire him to come to his house, but to *Speak the word only, and his Servant should be healed*: For he reasoned thus, *I am a man under authority, having Souldiers under me, and I say to this man go and he*
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goeth,

goeth, and to another come and he cometh; and to my Servant do this, and he doth it.

Now if he that was himself under authority, could thus command those that were under him; much more could he that had a divine Power and Commission, do what he pleased by his word. And our Saviour is so far from reprehending him for reasoning himself into this belief, that he admires his Faith so much the more for the reasonableness of it, *v. 10. When Jesus heard this, he marvelled, and said to them that followed him, verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel.*

Inlike manner our Saviour commends the Woman of Canaan's Faith, because she enforced it so reasonably. *Matthew 15. 22. She sued to him to help her Daughter, but he answered her not a word; and when his Disciples could not prevail with him to mind her, yet still she pressed him, saying, Lord help me; and when he repulsed her with this severe answer, It is not meet to take the Childrens bread and cast it to dogs, she made this quick and modest reply, truth Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Masters Table. She acknowledgeth her own unworthiness, but*

but yet believes his goodness to be such, that he will not utterly reject those who humbly seek to him; upon which he gives her this testimony, *O woman great is thy faith.*

The Apostles were divinely inspired, and yet the *Bereans* are commended, because they enquired and satisfied themselves in the reasons of their belief, before they assented to the doctrine which was delivered to them, even by Teachers that certainly were Infallible.

5. None are reprov'd in Scripture for their unbelief, but where sufficient reason and evidence was offer'd to them. The *Israelites* are generally blamed for their Infidelity; but then it was after such mighty wonders had been wrought for their Conviction.

The *Jews* in our Saviours time, are not condemn'd simply for their unbelief, but for not believing when there was such clear evidence offer'd to them. So our Saviour himself says, *If I had not done amongst them, the works which no other man did, they had not had sin.*

Thomas indeed is blamed for the perverseness of his unbelief, because he would believe nothing but what he himself saw.

Lastly, To shew this yet more plainly, let us consider the great inconvenience, and absurdity of declining the use of Reason in matters of Religion: There can be no greater prejudice to Religion, than to decline this tryal.

To say we have no Reason for our Religion, is to say it is unreasonable. Indeed it is Reason enough for any Article of our Faith, that God hath revealed it, because this is one of the strongest and most cogent reasons for the belief of any thing. But when we say God hath revealed any thing, we must be ready to prove it, or else we say nothing. If we turn off Reason here, we level the best Religion in the World with the wildest and most absurd Enthusiams.

And it does not alter the case much, to give Reason ill names, to call it blind, and carnal Reason. Our best reason is but very short and imperfect: But since it is no better, we must make use of it as it is, and make the best of it.

Before I pass from this Argument, I cannot but observe, that both the extremes of those who differ from our Church, are generally great Declamers against the use of Reason in matters of Faith:

Faith: If they find *their* account in it, 'tis well; for *our parts* we apprehend no manner of inconvenience, in having Reason on our side; nor need we to desire a better evidence, that any Man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare against Reason, and thereby to acknowledge that reason is against him. Men may vilifie Reason as much as they please; and tho being reviled she reviles not again, yet in a more still and gentle way, she commonly hath her full revenge upon all those that rail at her.

I have often wonder'd that people can with patience endure to hear their Teachers and Guides talk against Reason; and not only so, but they pay them the greater submission and veneration for it. One would think this but an odd way to gain authority over the minds of Men; but some skilful and designing men, have found by experience, that it is a very good way to recommend them to the ignorant, as Nurses use to endear themselves to Children, by perpetual noise and nonsense.

III. I observe, that God obligeth no Man to believe plain and evident Contradictions, as matters of Faith. *Abraham* could not reasonably have believed this

second revelation to have been from God; if he had not found some way to reconcile it with the first. For tho a Man were never so much disposed to submit his Reason to divine Revelation; yet it is not possible for any Man to believe God against God himself.

Some Men seem to think that they oblige God mightily, by believing plain contradictions. But the matter is quite otherwise. He that made Man a *reasonable* Creature, cannot take it kindly from any Man, to debase his workmanship, by making himself *unreasonable*. And therefore, as no service, or obedience; so no Faith is acceptable unto God, but what is reasonable; if it be not so, it may be confidence or presumption, but it is not Faith; for he that can believe plain contradictions, may believe any thing how absurd soever; because nothing can be more absurd, than the belief of a plain contradiction; and he that can believe any thing, believes nothing upon good grounds, because to him Truth and Falschood are all one.

4. I observe that the great cause of the defect of Mens obedience is the weakness of their Faith. Did we believe the commands of God in the Gospel, and

his promises and threatnings, as firmly as *Abraham* believed God in this case; what should we not be ready to do, or suffer in obedience to him? •

If our Faith were but as strong and vigorous as his was, the effects of it would be as great and conspicuous; were we verily persuaded that all the Precepts of our Religion are the express Laws of God, and that all the promises and threatnings of the Gospel will one day be verified and made good, *What manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness?* How would the lively thoughts of another world, raise us above the vanities of this present life; and set us out of the reach of the most powerful temptations that this world can assault us withal; and make us to do all things with regard to Eternity, and to that solemn and dreadful account which we must one day make to God the Judge of all?

It is nothing but the want of a firm and steady belief of these things, that makes our Devotion so dead and heartless, and our resolutions of doing better so weak and inconsistent. This it is, that makes us so easie a prey to every temptation; and the things of this

world to look so much bigger than they are ; the enjoyments of it more tempting, and the evils of it more terrible than in truth they are. And in all disputes betwixt our Conscience and our Interest, to hold the balance so unequally, and to put our foot upon the lighter Scale, that it may seem to weigh down the other.

In a word, in proportion to the strength or weakness of our Faith, our obedience to God will be more or less constant, uniform, and perfect ; because Faith is the great source and spring of all the Virtues of a good life.

5. We have great reason to submit to the ordinary strokes of God's Providence upon our selves, or near relations, or any thing that is dear to us. Most of these are easily compared with *Abraham's* case ; it requires a prodigious strength of Faith to perform so miraculous an act of obedience.

6. And lastly, We are utterly inexcusable, if we disobey the easie Precepts of the Gospel. *The yoke of Christ is easie, and his burden light*, in comparison of God's former dispensations. This was a grievous Commandment which God gave to *Abraham*, to sacrifice his only Son :

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It was a *hard saying* indeed ; and *which of us could have been able to bear it ?*

But if God think fit to call us to the more difficult duties of self-denial , and suffering for his truth and righteousness sake, we must after the example of faithful *Abraham*, not think much to deny or part with any thing for him, no not life it self. But even this which is the hardest part of Religion, is easier than what God put upon *Abraham*.

For it doth not offer near the violence to nature, to lay down our life in a good cause, as it would do, to put a Child to death with our own hands. Besides the consideration of the extraordinary comfort and support, and the glorious rewards that are expressly promised to our obedience and self denial in such a case ; encouragement enough to make a very difficult duty easie.

And whilst I am perswading you and my self to resolution and constancy in our Holy Religion, notwithstanding all hazards and hardships that may attend it, I have a just sense of the frailty of humane nature, and of humane resolution: But with all, a most firm persuasion of the goodness of God, that he will not suffer those who sincerely love him and
his

his Truth, *to be tempted above what they are able.*

I will add but one consideration more, to shew the difference betwixt *Abraham's* case and ours. God commanded him to do the hardest thing in the world, to sacrifice his only Son; but he hath given us an easie commandment; and that he might effectually oblige us to our duty, he hath done that for us which he required *Abraham* to do for him; *he hath not spared his own Son, his only Son, but hath given him up to death for us all: And hereby we know that he loveth us, that he hath given his Son for us.*

What God required of *Abraham*, he did not intend should be executed; but one great design of it was to be a Type and Figure of that immense love and kindness which he intended to all mankind, in the Sacrifice of his Son, as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

And as the most clear and expresse promise of the *Messias* was made to *Abraham*; so the most expresse and lively Type of the *Messias* that we meet with in all the old Testament, was *Abraham's* offering up his Son. And as *St. Hierom* tells us (from an ancient and constant Tradition

tion of the *Jews*) the Mountain in *Moriah*, where *Abraham* was commanded to Sacrifice *Isaac*, was Mount *Calvary*, where our Lord also was Crucified and offered up, that by this one sacrifice of himself once offered, he might perfect for ever them that are sanctified, and obtain eternal redemption for us.

Now to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, to God even our Father, and to our Lord *Jesus Christ* the first begotten from the dead; to the Prince of the Kings of the Earth; to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be Glory and honour, thanksgiving and power, now and for ever. Amen.

17

March 23rd 1865

Dear Mother
I received your letter of the 13th and was
glad to hear from you. I am well and hope
these few lines will find you the same.
I have not much news to write at present.
I am still in the same place and doing
the same work as before.

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I am still in the same place and doing
the same work as before. I have not much
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A
S E R M O N

Preached at

W H I T E - H A L L

MDCLXXXVII.

Before the

Princess A N N.

H E B. XI. 24, 25.

*By Faith Moses when he was come to years,
refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's
daughter ; chusing rather to suffer affli-
ction with the people of God, than to en-
joy the pleasures of sin for a season.*

THE Text sets before us a great
pattern of self-denial; for our bet-
ter understanding whereof, I will give
a brief account of the History of Moses,

to which our Apostle in this passage doth refer.

When *Moses* was born, his Parents (for fear of the cruel Law which *Pharaoh* had made, That all the male Children of the Hebrews, so soon as they were born, should be put to death) after they had hid him three months, did at last expose him in an Ark of Bulrushes, upon the River Nile, and committed him to the providence of God, whom they despair'd to conceal any longer by their own care.

Pharaoh's Daughter coming by the River side, espied him, and had compassion on him; and guessing him to be one of the Hebrew Children, called for an Hebrew Nurse, to take care of him, who, as the Providence of God had ordered it, proved to be the Childs own Mother. As he grew up, *Pharaoh's* Daughter took care of his Education in all Princely qualities, and adopted him for her Son; and *Pharaoh* (as *Josephus* tells us) being without Son, designed him Heir of his Kingdom.

Moses refused this great offer. But why did he refuse it, when it seem'd to be presented to him by the providence of God, and was brought about in so strange

strange a manner, and when by this means he might probably have had it in his power to have eased the *Israelites* of their cruel bondage, and perhaps have had the opportunity of reducing that great Kingdom from the worship of Idols to the true God? Why would he refuse a Kingdom which was offered to him with so fair an opportunity of doing so much good?

That which seems to have prevailed with *Moses*, was this, That he could not accept the offer, without forsaking God, and renouncing his Religion; for considering how strangely the *Egyptians* were addicted to Idolatry, he could never hope to be accepted for Heir of that Kingdom, unless he would violate his Conscience, either by abandoning or dissembling his Religion.

And how unlikely it was that he should prevail with them to change their Religion, he might easily judge by the example of *Joseph*, who tho he had so much authority and esteem amongst them, by having been so great a Benefactor to their Nation; yet he could never move them in the least, in that matter.

Now

Now seeing he had no hopes of attaining, or enjoying that dignity without sinning grievously against God, he would not purchase a Kingdom at so unconscionable a price. And as for the deliverance of his people, he was content to trust the providence and promise of God for that ; and in the mean time was resolved rather to take a part in the afflictions of God's people, *than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*

From the words thus explained, I shall take occasion to consider these Four things.

I. *Moses's* self-denial, in preferring and choosing a state of afflicted piety, before any sinful enjoyments whatsoever; before the greatest earthly happiness and prosperity, when it was not to be attained and enjoyed upon other terms than of sinning against God.

II. I shall consider those circumstances of this self-denial of *Moses*, which do very much commend and set off the virtue of it.

III. The prudence and reasonableness of this choice, in preferring a state of afflicted Piety and Virtue, before the greatest prosperity and pleasure of a sinful course.

IV. Sup-

IV. Supposing this choice to be reasonable, I shall inquire how it comes to pass that so many make another choice.

I. We will consider *Moses* his self-denial, in preferring a state of afflicted piety, before the greatest earthly happiness and prosperity, when it is not to be enjoyed upon other terms, than of sinning against God. He was adopted Heir of the Kingdom of *Egypt*, (one of the greatest and most flourishing Kingdoms then in the World;) But he could not hope to attain to this dignity, and to secure himself in the possession of it, upon other terms than of complying with that Nation, in their Idolatrous Religion and Worship.

Now being brought up in the belief of the true God, the God of *Israel*, by his Mother, to whom *Pharaoh's* Daughter had committed him, he could not without great violence to his Conscience, and the principles of his Education, renounce the true God, and fall off to the Idolatry of the *Egyptians*: And for this reason he refused to be called the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter, chusing rather to suffer affliction with the worshipers of the true God, than to

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have the temporary enjoyment of any thing that was not to be had without sin; for so the word ought to be render'd, ἢ πρόσκιρον ἔχειν ἀμαρτίας ἀπέλαυσιν *than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin.* So here was *Moses* his self-denial, that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the worshipers of the true God, than to gain a Kingdom, by the renouncing of God and Religion.

II. We will consider those circumstances of his self denial, which do very much commend and set off the virtue of it.

1. What it was he refused to be called; *the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter*; that is, to be Heir of one of the greatest and most flourishing Kingdoms in the world: a temptation so great, that the Devil himself could not find out one much greater, when he set upon the Son of God, to tempt him to fall down and worship him.

And when we consider for what inconsiderable things some men sell their Religion and their Consciences, we shall think it no small temptation which *Moses* here resisted. *Si violandum est jus regnandi causâ violandum est*; If a Man would do any unjust thing, and violate his Religion and Conscience, he would not do

it for less than a Kingdom ; and it would be a very hard bargain, even upon those terms.

2. Consider not only what he refused; but what he chose in the place of it; a state of great affliction and suffering. Had he refused a Kingdom, and chosen the quiet condition of a Subject of middle rank (beneath envy and above contempt,) his self-denial had not been so great ; nay perhaps he had made a wise choice, in the account of the wisest men, in preferring a plentiful and quiet retirement, before the cares of a Crown, and the burthen of publick Government.

But it is very rare to find a Man, that would choose rather to be oppressed and persecuted ; than to be a Prince, and to have the sweet power to use others as he pleased.

3. Consider how fair a prospect he had of enjoying this Kingdom, if he could but have come up to the terms of it. He did not reject it, because he despaired of attaining it : for he had all the right that a good title could give him, being adopted Heir to it ; and yet he refused it.

To which I may add, that his breeding was such, as might easily kindle ambitious thoughts in him. He was brought up in *Pharaoh's Court*, and was the Darling and Favourite of it; exceeding beautiful (as *Josephus* tells us) and learned in all the wisdom of the *Egyptians*; than which no two qualities are more apt to puff up, and swell a Man with big thoughts of himself.

They that are bred in a low condition, never think of a Kingdom; Men not being apt to aspire to things which are remote, and at a great distance from them. But nothing is more rare in persons of great and generous minds, than such a self-denial as this.

4. Let it be considered in the last place, that this was a deliberate choice, not any rash and sudden determination made by him, when he was of incompetent age to make a true judgment of things. And this the Apostle takes notice of in the Text, as a very memorable circumstance, *that when he was come to years, he refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter.* And St. Stephen tells us, that he was full forty years old when he made this choice, *Acts 7. 23. When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart,*

heart, to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. When he was of ripest judgment, and in the height of his prosperity, and reputation, he made this choice : for it is said in the verse before, that *Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in word and deed* ; that is, he was in great reputation for his Wisdom and Valour.

This seems to refer to other passages of his Life, which are not recorded in the Scripture History, but related at large by *Josephus* out of Historians extant in his time. For he tells, that when the *Ethiopians* had invaded *Egypt*, and almost over-run it, that *Pharaoh* was directed by the Oracle at *Memphis*, to make *Moses* his General, who by his extraordinary Conduct and Courage overthrew the *Ethiopians*, and drove them out of *Egypt*.

This *Moses* did not think fit to relate of himself; but *St. Stephen* seems to allude to it, when he says, that he was mighty in word and deed : And then it follows; *and when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel* ; that is, when he was at full maturity of judgment, and in the height of his Prosperity, and

Reputation, he quitted the Court of *Egypt*, and went to visit his afflicted Brethren, and chose rather to take part with them in their sufferings, than to accept those great offers that were made to him.

There is likewise another passage in *Josephus* concerning *Moses*, which seems to be a forerunner of the contempt which he shewed afterward of the Crown of *Egypt*; That when *Moses* was about three years old, *Thermuthis*, the Daughter of *Pharaoh*, brought the Child to him, who took him in his arms, and put his Diadem upon his Head, But *Moses* took it off, and cast it to the ground, and trampled it under his feet. This was but a childish act, and they who saw it, would easily believe, that for all his childish contempt of it then, if it were put upon his Head in good earnest, when he came to be a Man, he would hold it on faster, and use it with more respect.

And it is not improbable, but that the Apostle might have some regard to this, when he says, that *Moses* when he came to Years; intimating that he did not only trample upon the Diadem of *Pharaoh*, when he was a Child; but when

when he was come to years, and was capable of judging better of those things, he refused to be called the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter.

But before I proceed any farther, I cannot but take notice of an objection, which may seem to reflect greatly upon the integrity of *Moses*. Can we think him so very conscientious a Man, who persuaded the people of *Israel* (and pretended God's direction in the case) to cheat the *Egyptians* of their Jewels, under a fraudulent pretence of borrowing them? There is some difficulty in the thing, as at first sight it appears: And yet I doubt not, with your favourable attention, and free from prejudice, to vindicate *Moses* clearly in this matter.

And I shall not insist upon that, which is commonly and truly said in this case; That God, who is the supream Lord of all things, may transfer the Rights of Men from one to another: because the objection doth not lye against God's Right to take away from any Man what he hath given him; but against the fraudulent manner of doing it, which seems unworthy of God to command or encourage.

Now this matter I think is capable of another, and much clearer answer; which in short, is this, and grounded upon the History, as we find it related, *Ex. 12.* The Providence of God did, it seems, design by this way to make some reparation to the *Israelites*, for the tyrannical usage which they had received from the *Egyptians*: And that first (as the Text expressly tells us) *in giving them favour with the Egyptians*, who in truth, for their own ends, and to get rid of such troublesome Guests, were disposed to lend them any thing they had.

Thus far all is right. Here is nothing but fair borrowing and lending: And if the *Israelites* acquired a right to those things afterwards, there was then no obligation to restitution.

Let us see then how the Providence of God brought this about: Namely, by permitting the *Egyptians* afterwards, without cause, and after leave given them to depart, to pursue them, with a design to have destroyed them; by which Hostility and Perfidiousness they plainly forfeited their Right to what they had only lent before. For this hostile attempt, which would have warranted the *Israelites*

elites, to have spoiled them of their Jewels, if they had been in the possession of the *Egyptians*, did certainly warrant them to keep them when they had them; and by this means they became rightful possessors of what they had only by Loan before, and could not have detained without fraud and injustice, if this hostility of the *Egyptians* had not given them a new title and clear right to them.

But I proceed to the *third* thing I proposed, which was to vindicate the prudence and reasonableness of this choice. And in speaking to this, I shall abstract from the particular case of *Moses*, and shew in general, That it is a prudent and reasonable thing, to prefer even an afflicted state of Piety and Virtue, before the greatest pleasures and prosperity of a sinful course: And this will appear, if we consider these *two* things.

1. The sufferings of good Men upon account of Religion, together with the reward of them.

2. The temporary enjoyment of sin, with the mischiefs and inconveniences consequent upon them.

1. The

1. The sufferings of good Men, upon the account of Religion, together with the reward of them. This *Moses* had in his eye, when he made this choice; for therefore *he chose to suffer Affliction with the People of God, rather than to enjoy the Pleasures of sin, which are but for a Season, because he had respect to the recompence of reward.* And tho he had but a very imperfect discovery, in comparison of the future state, yet it seems he had so much assurance of the goodness of God, as firmly to believe that he should be no loser at the last, by any thing that he suffered for God and Religion. Indeed if there were no life after this, and we had no expectation beyond this world, the wisest thing we could do, would be to enjoy as much of the present contentment of this world, as we could make our selves Masters of.

But if we be designed for immortality, and shall be unspeakably happy, or intolerably miserable in another world, according as we have demeaned our selves in this life; then certainly it is reasonable that we should take the greatest care of the longest duration, and be content to dispense with some present inconveniences,
for

for an eternal felicity ; and be willing to labour and take pains for a little while, that we may be happy forever. And this is accounted prudence in the account of the wisest Men, to part with a little in present, for a far greater future advantage.

But the disproportion betwixt Time and Eternity is so vast , that did we but firmly believe, that we shall live for ever, nothing in this world could reasonably be thought too good to part withall, or too grievous to suffer for the obtaining of a blessed Immortality. And upon this belief and persuasion of a mighty reward, beyond all their present sufferings , and that they should be infinite gainers at the last , the Primitive Christians were kept from sinking under their present sufferings, and fortified against all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do unto them. And if we would consider all things together, and mind the invisible things of another world, as well as the things which are seen , we should easily discern that he who suffers for God and Religion, does not renounce his happiness, but put it out to Interest, upon terms of greatest advantage ; and does wisely consider his own best, and and most lasting interest. This is the *First*. II. This

II. This will yet more evidently appear, if we consider the temporary enjoyments of sin, together with the mischiefs and inconveniencies attending, and consequent upon them : That as to the nature of them, they are mixt, and imperfect ; as to the duration of them, they are short, and but for a season ; and as to the final issue and consequence of them, that they end in misery and sorrow.

1. As to the nature of them, all the pleasures and enjoyments of sin are mixt and imperfect. A wicked Man may make a shew of mirth and pleasure, but *even in laughter his heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.* There can be no true and sincere pleasure in any sinful and vitious course, tho it be attended with all the Pomp and Splendor of outward Happiness and Prosperity; for where ever sin and vice is, there must be guilt ; and wherever guilt is, the mind will be restless and unquiet.

For there are two very troublesome and tormenting passions, which are naturally consequent upon guilt ; Shame and Fear. Shame, arising from the apprehension of the danger of being discovered ; and Fear, from the apprehension

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on of the danger of being punisht : And these do continually haunt the sinner, and fill him with inward horror and confusion, in his most secret retirements. And if sin were attended with no other trouble but the guilt of it, a wise Man would not commit it, if it were for no other reason, but meerly for the peace and quiet of his own mind.

2. The enjoyments of sin, as to the duration of them are but short. Upon this consideration, *Moses* set no great price and value upon them, but preferred affliction and suffering in good company, and in a good cause, before the temporary enjoyments of sin.

If the enjoyments of this world were perfect in their nature, and had no mixture of trouble and sorrow in them : Yet this would be a great abatement of them, that they are of so short and uncertain a continuance. The pleasure of most sins expires with the act of them; and when that is done, the delight vanisheth.

I cannot deny but there are several worldly advantages to be purchased by sin, which may perhaps be of a longer continuance; as Riches and Honours, the common purchase of Covetousness

tousness and Ambition, and of that long train of inferiour Vices which attend upon them, and minister unto them; but even these enjoyments are in their own nature of an uncertain continuance, and much more uncertain for being purchased by indirect and ill means. But if the enjoyment of these things were sure to be of the same date with our lives, yet how short a duration is that compared with Eternity? make the utmost allowance to these things, that can be; yet we can but enjoy them whilst we are in this world. When we come into the world of spirits, it will signifie nothing to us to have been rich or great in this world. When we shall stand before that highest Tribunal, it will not avail us in the least to have been Princes, and great Men, and Judges on the Earth; the poorest Man that ever lived in this world, will then be upon equal terms with the biggest of us all.

For all mankind shall then stand upon a level, and those civil distinctions of rich and poor, of base and honourable, which seem now so considerable, and make such a glaring difference amongst Men in this world, shall all then be

be laid aside, and moral differences shall only take place. All the distinctions which will then be made, will be betwixt the good and the bad ; the righteous and the wicked ; and the difference betwixt a good and bad Man, will be really much greater than ever it seemed to be, betwixt the highest and meanest persons in this world.

And if this be so, why should we value the enjoyments of sin at so high a rate, which at the best are only considerable (and that only in the imagination of vain Men) during our abode in this world, but bear no price at all in that Country where we must live for ever: Or if they did, we cannot carry them along with us. The guilt of them indeed will follow us with a vengeance ; the injustice and all the ill arts we have used for the getting or keeping of them, especially, if at once we have *made Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience.*

If we have changed our Religion, or which is much worse, if continuing in the profession of it, we have betrayed it, and the interest of it, for the gaining or securing of any of these things ; we shall find to our sorrow, that tho the enjoyments of sin were but for a season,

son, the guilt of it will never leave us, nor forsake us, but will stick close to us, and make us miserable for ever. But this belongs to the

III. Thing I proposed to speak to, namely, The final issue, and consequence of a sinful course, which is misery and sorrow, many times in this world ; but most certainly in the next.

I. In this world, the very best issue and consequence of a sinful course, that we can imagin, is Repentance : And even this hath a great deal of sensible pain and trouble in it ; for it is many times (especially after great sins, and a long continuance in them ,) accompanied with much regret and horror ; with deep and piercing sorrow ; with dismal and despairing thoughts of God's mercy ; and with fearful apprehensions of his wrath and vengeance. So that if this were the worst consequence of sin (which indeed is the best) no Man that considers and calculates things wisely, would purchase the pleasure of any sin, at the price of so much anguish and sorrow, as a true and deep repentance will cost him ; especially, since a true repentance, does in many cases oblige Men to the restitution of

of that which hath been gained by sin, if it hath been got by the injury of another.

And this consideration quite takes away the pleasure and profit of an ill gotten Estate. Better never to have had it; than to be obliged to refund it. A wise Man will forbear the most pleasant meats; if he know before-hand that they will make him deadly sick; and that he shall never be at ease, till he have brought them up again.

No Man that believes the threatnings of God, and the judgment of another world, would ever sin, but that he hopes to retrieve all again by repentance. But it is the greatest folly in the world to commit any sin upon this hope; for that is to please ones self for the present, in hopes to have more trouble afterwards than the pleasure comes to. But especially, no Man would be guilty of an act of injustice and oppression, in hopes to repent of it afterwards; because there can be no repentance for such sins without restitution; and 'tis perfect madness for a Man to run the hazard of his Soul, to get an Estate, in hopes of restoring it again; for so he must do that truly repents of such a sin. But,

2. In the other world, the final issue and consequence of all the pleasures of sin unrepented of, will certainly be misery and sorrow. How quietly soever a sinner may pass through this world, or out of it; misery will certainly overtake him in the next, unspeakable and eternal misery, arising from an apprehension of the greatest loss, and a sense of the sharpest pain; and those sadly aggravated by the remembrance of past pleasure, and the despair of future ease.

From a sad apprehension and melancholy reflection upon his inestimable loss. In the other world; the sinner shall be eternally separated from God, who is the fountain of happiness. This is the first part of that miserable sentence which shall be past upon the wicked; *depart from me.*

Sinners are not now sensible of the joys of Heaven, and the happiness of that state, and therefore are not capable of estimating the greatness of such a loss: But this stupidity and insensibleness of sinners, continues only during this present state, which affords Men variety of objects and pleasures, to divert and entertain them: But when they
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are once enter'd upon the other world, they will then have nothing else to take up their thoughts, but the sad condition, into which by their own wilful negligence and folly, they have plunged themselves. They shall then, *lift up their eyes*, and with the rich Man in the parable, *at once see the happiness of others, and feel their own misery and torment.*

But this is not all. Besides the apprehension of so great a loss, they shall be sensible of the sorest and sharpest pains; and how grievous those shall be, we may conjecture by what the Scripture says of them in general; That they are the effects of a mighty displeasure, of Anger and Omnipotence met together, far greater than can be described by any pains and sufferings which we are acquainted withall in this world: *For who knows the power of Gods anger, and the utmost of what Omnipotent Justice can do to sinners? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

One would think this were misery enough, and needed no frather aggravation; but yet it hath two terrible ones; from the remembrance of past pleasures, and the despair of any future ease and remedy.

The remembrance of past pleasure makes present sufferings more sharp and sensible. For as nothing commends pleasure more, and gives a quicker relish to happiness, than precedent pain and suffering: (for perhaps there is not a greater pleasure in the world, than in the suddain ease which a Man finds after a sharp fit of the Stone) so nothing enrageth affliction more, and sets a keener edge upon misery, than to pass into great pain immediately out of a state of ease and pleasure. This was the stinging aggravation of the rich Man's torment, *That in his life time he had received his good things, and had faired so deliciously every day.*

But the greatest aggravation of all is, the despair of any future ease and remedy. The duration of this misery, is set forth to us in Scripture, by such expressions as do signifie the longest and most interminable duration. *Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire,* Matth. 25. and Mark 9. 43. *Where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.* And in the Revel. it is said, *that the wicked shall be tormented, day and night, for ever and ever*; without intermission, and without end. And this surely is the perfection of misery, for a Man to lye under the
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the greatest torments, and to be in despair of ever finding the least ease.

Let us now compare things together : on the one hand, the sufferings of good Men, for a good Conscience, and the reward that follows them ; and on the other hand, the enjoyments of sin, with the mischief and misery that attends them, and will certainly overtake them in this world, or the next : and then we shall easily discern which of these is to be preferred in a wise Man's choice.

And indeed the choice is so very plain, that a Man must be strangely forsaken of his reason, and blinded by sense, who does not prefer that course of life, which will probably make him happier in this world, - but most certainly in the next.

There remains now only the *Fourth* and *last* particular to be spoken to ; *viz.* Supposing this choice to be reasonable, to enquire whence it comes to pass, that so many make a quite contrary choice. How is it that the greatest part of mankind are so widely mistaken, as to prefer the temporary enjoyments of sin, before Conscience and Religion ; especially, if it be attended with great afflictions and sufferings ? And of this I shall give you

as brief an account as I can, and so conclude this Discourse.

This wrong choice, generally proceeds from one or both of these two causes; from want of Faith; or from want of consideration; or of both.

1. One great reason why Men make so imprudent a choice, is unbelief; either the want of Faith, or the weakness of it. Either Men do not believe the recompences of another life, or they are not so firmly persuaded of the reality of them. If Men do not at all believe these things, there is no foundation for Religion; for *he that cometh unto God* (that is, he that thinks of being religious) *must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, as the Apostle reasons in the beginning of this Chapter.

But I hope, there are but few that are, or can be Infidels, as to these great and fundamental principles of Religion. But it is to be feared, that the Faith of a great many, is but weak and wavering; their Faith is rather negative; they do not disbelieve these things, but they are not firmly persuaded of them; their Faith is rather an opinion, than a root-
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ed and well grounded persuasion; and therefore no wonder if it be not so strong, and vigorous a principle of action, and like the Faith of *Abraham* and *Moses*, and other worthies mentioned in this Chapter. For where Faith is in its full strength and vigour, it will have proportionable effects upon the resolutions and wills of Men; But where it is but weak, it is of little or no efficacy. And this is the true reason, why so many forsake Religion, and cleave to this present world; and when it comes to the push, choose rather to sin, than to suffer; and will rather quit the truth, than endure persecution for it.

These are they, whom our Saviour describes, *who receive the word with joy, and endure for a while; but when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, presently they are offended*; not that they did not believe the Words, but their Faith had taken no deep root, and therefore it withered. The weakness and wavering of Mens Faith, makes them unstable and inconstant in their course; because they are not of one mind, but divided betwixt two interests, that of this world, and the other; and

the double minded man (as St. James tells us) is unstable in all his ways.

It is generally a true rule; so much wavering as we see in the actions and lives of Men, so much weakness there is in their Faith; and therefore he that would know what any Man firmly believes, let him attend to his actions more than to his professions.

If any Man live so, as no Man that heartily believes the Christian Religion can live, it is not credible that such a Man doth firmly believe the Christian Religion. He says he does; but there is a greater evidence in the case than words; there is *Testimonium rei*, the Man's actions are to the contrary, and they do best declare the inward sense of the Man. Did Men firmly believe, that there is a God that governs the world, and that he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge it in righteousness; and that all mankind shall shortly appear before him, and give an account of themselves; and all their actions to him; and that those who have kept the Faith and a good Conscience, and have lived soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world, shall be unspeakably and eternally happy; but

but the fearful and unbelieving, those who out of fear or interest, have deserted the Faith, or lived wicked lives, shall have their portion in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone; I say, were Men firmly persuaded of these things, it is hardly credible that any Man should make a wrong choice, and forsake the ways of Truth and Righteousness, upon any temptation whatsoever.

Faith, even in temporal matters, is a mighty principle of action, and will make Men to attempt and undergo strange and difficult things. The Faith of the Gospel ought to be much more operative and powerful; because the Objects of Hope and Fear, which it presents to us, are far greater, and more considerable, than any thing that this world can tempt or terrify us withall.

Would we but by Faith make present to our minds, the invisible things of another world; the happiness of Heaven, and the terrors of Hell, and were we as verily persuaded of them, as if they were in our view, how should we despise all the pleasures and terrors of this world! And with what ease should we resist and repel all those temptations, which would
seduce

seduce us from our duty, or draw us into sin.

A firm and unshaken belief of these things, would effectually remove all those mountains of difficulty and discouragement, which Men fancy to themselves in the ways of Religion. *To him that believeth, all things are possible, and most things would be easie.*

2. Another reason of this wrong choice, is want of consideration; for this would strengthen our Faith, and make it more vigorous and powerful: And indeed a Faith which is well rooted and established should doth suppose a wise and deep consideration of things; and the want of this is a great cause of the fatal miscarriage of Men; that they do not sit down and consider with themselves seriously, how much Religion is their interest, and how much it will cost them to be true to it, and to persevere in it to the end.

We suffer our selves to be governed by sense, and to be transported with present things; but do not consider our future and lasting interest, and the whole duration of an immortal Soul. And this is the reason, why so many men are hurried away by the present and sensible delights of this world; because they will not take

take time to think of what will be hereafter.

For it is not to be imagined, but that the Man who hath seriously considered what sin is ; the shortness of its pleasure, and the eternity of its punishment ; should resolve to forsake sin, and to live a holy and virtuous life.

To conclude this whole Discourse. If Men did but seriously believe the great principles of Religion ; the Being and the Providence of God ; the immortality of their Souls ; the glorious rewards, and the dreadful punishments of another world ; they could not possibly make so imprudent a choice, as we see a great part of mankind to do ; they could not be induced to forsake God and Religion for any temporal interest and advantage ; to renounce the favour of Heaven, and all their hopes of happiness in another world, for any thing that this world can afford, nay not for the whole world, if it were offered to them. For as our Saviour reasons in this very case of forsaking our Religion for any temporal interest, or consideration ; *what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own Soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul ?*

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When ever any of us are tempted in this kind ; let that solemn declaration of our Saviour and our Judge be continually in our minds ; *be that confesseth me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven ; but whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy Angels.*

And we have great cause to thank God, to see so many in this day of tryal, and hour of temptation, to adhere with so much resolution and constancy to their Holy Religion, and to prefer *the keeping of Faith, and a good Conscience,* to all earthly considerations and advantages.

And this very thing, that so many hold their Religion so fast, and are so loth to part with it, gives great hopes that they intend to make good use of it, and to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it ; which alone can give us peace whilst we live, and comfort when we come to die ; and after death secure to us the possession of a happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our Souls.

The Third Sermon.

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To which, God of his Infinite Goodness
bring us all, for his mercy's sake, in Je-
sus Christ : To whom, with the Father, and
the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory,
World without end. Amen.

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A
S E R M O N
O N

H E B. X. 23.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith
without wavering ; for he is faithful that
hath promised.*

THE main Scope and design of this Epistle to the *Hebrews*, is to persuade the *Jews*, who were newly converted to Christianity, to continue steadfast in the profession of that Holy and Excellent Religion which they had embraced ; and not to be removed from it, either by the subtile insinuations of their Brethren the *Jews*, who pretended that they were in possession of the true ancient Religion, and the only true Church of God upon Earth ; or by the terrour of
the

Heathen persecution which was so hot against them at that time. And to this end the Author of this Epistle doth by great variety of arguments demonstrate the excellency of the Christian Religion above the *Jewish* dispensation ; and shews at large, that in all those respects upon which the *Jews* valued themselves and their Religion (as namely upon the account of their Lawgiver, their High-Priests and their Sacrifices) the Christian Religion had every way the advantage of them.

And having made this clear, he concludes with an earnest exhortation to them to continue stedfast in the profession of this excellent Religion, which was revealed to them by the Son of God, the true propitiatory Sacrifice, and the great High-Priest of their profession, and into which they had solemnly been initiated and admitted by Baptism ; *vers.* 19, 20, 21, 22. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an high-priest over the house of God : Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, (that is, let us sincerely serve*

serve God with a firm persuasion of the Truth and Excellency of this Holy Religion, into the Profession whereof we were solemnly admitted by Baptism; for that is undoubtedly the meaning of the following words; *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our bodies washt with pure water*; the Water with which our Bodies are washt in Baptism, signifying our spiritual Regeneration, and the purging of our Consciences from dead Works, to serve the living God. From all which he concludes, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*: This refers to that solemn Profession of Faith, which was made by all Christians at their Baptism, and which is contained in the ancient Creed of the Christian Church, called by the ancient Fathers, *The Rule of Faith*.

Let us hold fast, *κατέχωμεν*, let us firmly retain; the same with *κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας*. Chap. 4. 14. Seeing then we have a great high-priest which is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us take fast hold of our profession. So here in the Text, the

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Apostle

Apostle upon the same Consideration exhorts Christians *to retain, or hold fast*, ἡ ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος, *the Confession or Profession of their hope*; that is, the Hope of the Resurrection of the Dead, and everlasting Life, which was the Conclusion of that *Faith or Creed*, whereof in Baptism they made a Solemn Profession. *Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith or Hope without wavering*; the word is ἀκλινῆ, *inflexible, unmoveable, steady*, and not apt to waver and be shaken by every Wind of contrary Doctrine, nor by the Blasts and Storms of Persecution. *For he is faithful that hath promised*. If we continue faithful and steady to God, he will be *faithful* to make good all the Promises which he hath made to us.

In the words thus explained, there are *Two* things which I shall distinctly consider.

I. The Exhortation; *Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering*: And

II. The Argument or Encouragement used to enforce it; *He is faithful that promised*. So I begin with the

I. The

1. The Exhortation, to be constant and steady in the Profession of the Christian Religion : *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* In the handling of this, and that we may the better understand the true meaning of this Exhortation here in the Text, I shall do these *two* things.

1. I shall shew Negatively, wherein this Constancy and Steadiness in the Profession of the true Religion, does not consist. And here I shall remove one or two things which are thought by some, to be inconsistent with Constancy and Steadfastness in Religion.

2. I shall shew Positively, what is implied in a Constant and Steady Profession of the true Religion.

1. I shall shew Negatively, what Constancy and Steadfastness in the Profession of the true Religion does not imply. And there are *two* things which are thought by some to be imply'd, *in holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

1. That Men should not take the liberty to examine their Religion, and enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of it.

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2. That

2. That men should obstinately refuse to hear any Reasons that can be brought against the true Religion as they think, which they have once entertained.

1. That Men should not take the liberty to examine their Religion, and to enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of it. This I think is so far from being forbidden in this Exhortation ; that on the contrary, I doubt not to make it appear, that a free and impartial Enquiry into the Grounds and Reasons of our Religion, and a thorough Tryal and Examination of them, is one of the best Means to confirm and establish us in the Profession of it : I mean, that all Persons that are capable of it, should do it. and that they will find great benefit and advantage by it. For I do not think that this is a Duty equally and indifferently incumbent upon all ; nor indeed fit and proper for all Persons ; because all are not equally capable of doing it. There are two sorts of Persons that are in a great measure incapable of doing it.

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1. Children.

2. Such grown Persons as are of a very mean and low capacity, and improvement of Understanding.

Children are not fit to examine, but only to learn and believe what is taught them by their Parents and Teachers: They are fit to have the fear of God, and the Principles of the true Religion instilled into them; but they are by no means fit to discern between a true and false Religion, and to chuse for themselves, and to make a change of their Religion; as hath of late been allowed to them in a Nation not far from us, and by publick Edict declared, that Children at Seven Years Old, are fit to chuse and to change their Religion: Which is the first Law I ever heard of, that allows Children of that Age to do any act for themselves, that is of Consequence and Importance to them, for the remaining part of their Lives, and which they shall stand obliged to perform and make good. They are indeed Baptized, according to the custome and usage of the Chri-

stian Church, in their Infancy ; but they do not enter into this Obligation themselves ; but their Sureties undertake for them, that when they come to Age, they shall take this Promise upon themselves, and confirm and make it good. But surely, they can do no Act for themselves, and in their own Name, at that Age, which can be obligatory : They can neither make any Contracts that shall be valid , nor incur any Debt, nor oblige themselves by any Promise, nor chuse themselves a Guardian, nor do any Act that may bring them under an Inconvenience , when they shall come at Age. And can we think them of discretion sufficient at that time, to do a thing of the greatest Moment and Consequence of all other ; and which will concern them to all Eternity ; namely, to chuse their Religion ? There is indeed one Part of one Religion (which we all know) which Children at *Seven* Years of Age are fit (I do not say to judge of, but) to be as fond of, and to practise to as good purpose, as those of
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riper Years ; and that is, to worship Images, to tell their Beads, to say their Prayers, and to be present at the Service of God in an unknown Tongue ; and this they are more likely to chuse at that Age, than those who are of riper and more improv'd Understandings ; and if they do not chuse it at that time, it is ten to one, they will not chuse it afterwards. I shall say no more of this, but that it is a very extraordinary Law, and such as perhaps was never thought of before, from the beginning of the World. Thus much for Children.

As for grown Persons, who are of a very low and mean capacity of Understanding, and either by reason of the weakness of their Faculties, or other Disadvantages which they lye under, are in little or no probability of improving themselves ; These are always to be considered as in the condition of Children, and Learners, and therefore must of necessity, in things which are not plain and obvious to the meanest Capacities, trust and rely upon the Judgment of others. And it is really

much wiser and safer for them so to do, than to depend upon their own Judgments, and to lean to their own Understandings ; and such Persons, if they be modest and humble, and pray earnestly to God for his Assistance and Direction, and are careful to practise what they know, and to live up to the best Light and Knowledge which they have, shall not miscarry, meerly for want of those farther degrees of Knowledge which they had no Capacity nor Opportunity to attain ; because their Ignorance is unavoidable, and God will require no more of them than he hath given them, and will not call them to account for the improvement of those Talents, which he never committed to them. And if they be led into any dangerous Error, by the negligence or ill conduct of those, under whose Care and Instruction the Providence of God permitted them to be placed, God will not impute it to them as a Fault : Because in the Circumstances in which they were, they took the best and wisest course that they could,

could, to come to the knowledge of the Truth, by being willing to learn what they could of those, whom they took to be wiser than themselves.

But for such Persons, who by the maturity of their Age, and by the natural strength and clearness of their Understandings, or by the due exercise and improvement of them, are capable of enquiring into, and understanding the Grounds of their Religion, and discerning the difference betwixt Truth and Error (I do not mean in unnecessary Points and matters of deepest Learning and Speculation, but in matters necessary to Salvation) it is certainly very reasonable, that such Persons should examine their Religion, and understand the Reasons and Grounds of it.

And this must either be granted to be reasonable; or else every man must continue in that Religion in which he happens to be fixt by Education, or for any other Reason to
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pitch upon, when he comes to Years and makes his free Choice. For if this be a good Principle, that no Man is to examine his Religion, but take it as it is, and to believe it, and rest satisfied with it: Then every Man is to remain in the Religion which he first lights upon, whether by Choice or the Chance of his Education. For he ought not to change but upon Reason; and Reason he can have none, unless he be allowed to examine his Religion and to compare it with others, that by the Comparison he may discern which is best, and ought in reason to be preferred in his Choice. For to him that will not, or is not permitted to search into the Grounds of any Religion, all Religions are alike; as all things are of the same Colour, to him that is always kept in the dark, or if he happens to come into the Light, dares not open his Eyes, and make use of them to discern the different Colours of things.

But this is evidently and at first sight unreasonable; because at this rate,

rate, every Man that hath once entertained an Errour, and a false Religion, must forever continue in it: For if he be not allowed to examine it, he can never have Reason to change; and to make a change without Reason, is certainly unreasonable, and mere Vanity and Inconstancy.

And yet for ought I can see, this is the Principle which the Church of *Rome* doth with great Zeal and Earnestness inculcate upon their People; discouraging all Doubts and Inquiries about their Religion, as Temptations of the Devil; and all Examinations of the Grounds and Reasons of their Religion, as an inclination and dangerous step towards Heresie. For what else can they mean, by taking the Scriptures out of the hands of the People, and locking them up from them in an unknown Tongue; by requiring them absolutely to submit their Judgments, and to resign them up to that which they are pleased to call the Catholick Church, and Implicitly to believe

lieve as She believes, tho they know not what that is? This is in Truth, to believe as their Priest tells them; for that is all the teaching Part of the Church, and all the Rule of Faith that the common People are acquainted with.

And it is not sufficient to say in this matter; that when Men are in the Truth, and of the right Religion, and in the Bosom of the true Church, they ought to rest satisfied, and to examine and enquire no farther: For this is manifestly unreasonable, and that upon these *Three* accounts.

1. Because this is a plain and shameful begging of the thing in Question; and that which every Church, and every Religion doth almost with equal Confidence pretend to; That Theirs is the only right Religion, and the only true Church: And these Pretences are all alike reasonable to him that never examined the Grounds of any of them, nor hath compar'd them together. And therefore it is

is the vainest thing in the World, for the Church of *Rome* to pretend, that all Religions in the World ought to be examined, but Theirs; Because Theirs, and none else, is the true Religion. For this which they say so confidently of it, That it is the true Religion, no Man can know till he have examined it, and searched into the Grounds of it, and hath considered the Objections which are against it: So that it is fond Partiality to say that, Their Religion is not to be examined by the people that profess it; but that all other Religions ought to be examined, or rather, because they are different from That which they presume to be the only true Religion, ought to be condemned at all adventures, without any farther enquiry. This I say is fond Partiality; because every Religion and every Church may (for ought that appears to any man that is not permitted to examine things impartially) say the same for themselves, and with as much Reason; and if so, then either every Religion ought to permit it self to be examined;

mined ; or else no man ought to examine his own Religion whatever it be ; and consequently *Jews* and *Turks*, and *Heathens*, and *Hereticks*, ought all to continue as they are, and none of them to change ; because they cannot reasonably change, without examining both that Religion which they leave, and that which they embrace instead of it.

2. Admitting this Pretence were true ; that They are the true Church¹, and have the true Religion ; This is so far from being a Reason why they should not permit it to be examined, that on the contrary, it is one of the best Reasons in the World why they should allow it to be examined , and why they may safely suffer it to be so. They should permit it to be tryed ; that men may upon good Reason be satisfied, that it is the true Religion : And they may safely suffer it to be done ; because, if They be sure that the Grounds of their Religion be firm and good, I am sure, they will be never the worse for being examined and look'd into

into. But I appeal to every Man's Reason; whether it be not an ill Sign, that they are not so sure that the Grounds of their Religion are solid and firm, and such as will abide the Tryal; that they are so very loth to have them searcht into and examined? This cannot but tempt a wise Man to suspect, that their Church is not founded upon a Rock; and that they themselves know something that is amiss in their Religion, which makes them so loth to have it try'd, and brought to the Touch.

3. It is certain among all Christians, that the Doctrine preached by the Apostles was the true Faith of Christ; and yet they never forbad the Christians to examine whether it were so or not: Nay, on the contrary, they frequently exhort them to try and examine their Religion, and whether that Doctrine which they had delivered to them was the true Faith of Christ. So St. Paul; 2 Corinth. 13. 5. *Examine your selves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.* And again, 1 Thes.

I *Thes.* 5. 21. *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good* intimating to us, that in order to the holding fast the Profession of our Faith, it is requisite to prove and try it. And so likewise St. *John's* Ep. 1. 4. 1. *Beloved, believe not every Spirit; but try the Spirits whether, they are of God; because many false Prophets are gone out into the world.* And he gives a very notable mark, whereby we may know the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of Error. The Spirit of Error carries on a worldly Interest and Design; and the Doctrines of it tend to Secular Power and Greatness; *vers.* 5. *They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* *Acts* 17. 11. St. *Luke* commends it as an argument of a more noble and generous Spirit in the *Beræans*; that they examined the Doctrine which the Apostles preached, *whether it were agreeable to the Scriptures*; and this without Disparagement to their Infallibility; *These, saith he, were more noble, than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind*

mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. They were ready to receive the Word; but not blindly, and with an implicit Faith; but using due Care to examine the Doctrines which they were taught, and to see if they were agreeable to that Divine Revelation of the Holy Scriptures, which they had before received. It seems they were not willing to admit and swallow Contradictions in their Faith. And we desire no more of the Church of Rome, than that they would encourage the people to *search the Scriptures daily, and to examine whether their Doctrines be according to them.* We would be glad to hear the Pope and a General Council commend to the People the searching of the Scriptures; and to try their Definitions of Faith and Decrees of Worship, by that Rule, to see whether what they have defined and decreed to be believed and practised, be agreeable to it; their Worship of Images; their solemn Invocation of Angels, and of the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints
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departed ; the Sacrament under one kind only ; the publick Prayers and Service of God in an unknown Tongue ; the frequent Repetition of the Propitiatory Sacrifice of Christs Body and Blood in the Mass. Had the *Beræans* been at the Council of *Trent* and pleaded their Right to *search the Scriptures, whether these things were so* ; I doubt they would have been thought very troublesome and imperinent, and would not have been praised by the Pope and Council for their pains, as they are by *St. Luke*.

You see then, upon the whole matter, that it is a very groundless and suspicious Pretence of the Church of *Rome*, that because They are Infallibly in the right, and Theirs is the true Religion, therefore their people must not be permitted to examine it. The Doctrine of the Apostles was undoubtedly the true Faith of Christ ; and yet they not only permitted the people to examine it, but exhorted and encouraged them to do, and commended them for

for it : And any Man that hath the Spirit of a Man, must abhor to submit to this Slavery, not to be allowed to examine his Religion, and to enquire freely into the Grounds and Reasons of it; and would break with any Church in the World upon this single Point; and would tell them plainly, if your Religion be too good to be Examined, I doubt it is too bad to be Believed.

If it be said, that the allowing of this Liberty is the way to make people perpetually doubting and unsettled : I do utterly deny this, and do on the contrary with good Reason affirm, that it is apt to have the contrary effect; There being in reason no better way to establish any man in the belief of any thing, than to let him see that there are very good Grounds and Reasons for what he believes; which no man can ever see, that is not permitted to examine whether there be such Reasons or not. So that besides the Reasonableness of the thing, it is of
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great benefit and advantage to us.
And that upon these Accounts.

1. To arm us against Seducers. He that hath examined his Religion, and tryed the Grounds of it, is most able to maintain them, and make them good against all Assaults that may be made upon us, to move us from our Stedfastness: Whereas he that hath not examined, and consequently does not understand the Reasons of his Religion, is liable to be *tossed to and fro, and to be carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the slight of Men, and the cunning Craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive.* For when he is attempted; he will either defend his Religion or not: If he undertake the Defence of it, before he hath examined the Grounds of it; he makes himself an easie Prey to every crafty man that will set upon him; he exposeth at once himself to Danger, and his Religion to Disgrace: If he decline the defence of it; he must be forced to
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take Sanctuary in that Ignorant and Obstinate Principle, That because he is of an Infallible Church, and sure that he is in the right, therefore he never did nor will examine whether he be so or not. But how is he, or can he be sure, that he is in the right; if he have no other Reason for it, but his Confidence, and his being wiser in his own conceit, than Seven men that can render a Reason? It is a shameful thing in a wise man, who is able to give a good Reason of all other Actions and parts of his Life, to be able to say nothing for his Religion, which concerns him more than all the rest.

2. To examine and understand the Grounds of our Religion, will be a good means (by the assistance of Gods Grace) to keep us constant to it, even under the fiery Tryal. When it comes to this, that a man must suffer for his Religion, he had need to be well established in the Belief of it; which no man can so well be, as he that in some good measure understands the Grounds and

Reasons of his Belief. A man would be well assured of the Truth and Goodness of that, for which he would lay down his Life; otherwise *he dies as a Fool dies*, he knows not for what. A man would be loth to set such a Seal to a Blank, I mean, to that which he hath no sufficient Ground and Reason to believe to be true; which, whether he hath or not, no man that hath not examined the Grounds of his Religion can be well assured of. This St. Peter prescribes, as the best Preparative for suffering for Righteousness sake, the 1st. Ep. of Peter, 3. 14, 15. *But if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled: But sanctifie the Lord God in your hearts; (that is, make him the great Object of your Dread and Trust) and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*

2. The holding fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, doth not imply, that Men should ob-

obstinately refuse to hear any Reason against that Religion which they have embraced, and think to be the true Religion. As Men should examine before they chuse; so after they have chosen, they should be ready to be better informed, if better Reason can be offered. No Man ought to think himself so infallible, as to be priviledged from hearing Reason, and from having his Doctrines and Dictates tryed by that Test.

Our Blessed Saviour himself, the most Infallible Person that ever was in the World, and who *declared the Truth which he had heard of God*, yet He offered himself and his Doctrine to this Tryal. *John 8. 46. Which of you convinceth me of sin? that is, of Falsehood and Error? And if I speak the truth, why do ye not believe me?* He was sure he spake the Truth; and yet for all that, if they could convince him of Error and Mistake, he was ready to hear any Reason they could bring to that purpose. Though a Man be never so sure that he is in the true Religion,

gion, and never so resolved to continue constant and stedfast in it; yet Reason is always to be heard, when it is fairly offered. And as we ought always to be *ready to give an Answer to those who ask a Reason of the Hope and Faith that is in us*; so ought we likewise to be ready to hear the Reasons which others do fairly offer against our Opinion and Persuasion in Religion, and to debate the matter with them; that if we be in the right, and they in the wrong, we may rectifie their Mistakes, and *instruct them in meekness, if God peradventure may give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth.*

We are not only to examine our Religion, before we peremptorily fix upon it; but after we are, as we think upon the best Reason, establisht and settled in it. Tho we ought not to doubt and waver in our Religion, upon every slight and trifling Objection that can be brought against it; yet we ought always to have an Ear open to hear Reason, and consider any thing of Weight

Weight and Moment that can be offered to us about it. For it is a great Disparagement to Truth, and argues a distrust of the Goodness of our Cause and Religion, to be afraid to hear what can be said against it: As if Truth were so weak, that in every Conflict it were in danger to be baffled, and run down, and go by the worst; and as if the Reasons that could be brought against it, were too hard for it, and not to be encounter'd by those Forces which Truth has on its side.

We have that honest Confidence of the Goodness of our Cause and Religion, that we do not fear what can be said against it: And therefore we do not forbid our people to examine the Objections of our Adversaries, and to read the best Books they can write against it. But the Church of *Rome* are so *wise in their Generation*, that they will not permit those of their Communion to hear or read what can be said against them: Nay, they will not permit the people the use of the
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Holy Scriptures, which they, with us, acknowledge to be at least an Essential Part of the Rule of Faith. They tell their people, that after they are once of their Church and Religion, they ought not to hear any Reasons against it ; and though they be never so strong, they ought not to entertain any doubt concerning it; because all doubting is a Temptation of the Devil, and a Mortal Sin. But surely that Church is not to be heard, which will not hear Reason; nor that Religion to be much admired, which will not allow those that have once embraced it, to hear it ever after debated and examined. This is a very suspicious Business, and argues, that either they have not Truth on their side; or that Truth is a weak, and pitiful, and sneaking Thing, and not able to make its party good against Error.

I should now have proceeded in the *Second* place, to shew *Positively* what is implied in *holding fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering,*

vering; and then to have considered the Argument and Encouragement hereto, *because he is faithful that promised.* But I shall proceed no farther at this time.

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S E R M O N

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H E B. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.

I Have already made entrance into these Words, which I told you do contain in them,

I. An Exhortation, to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering.

II. An Argument or Encouragement thereto; because he is Faithful that promised. If we continue
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stedfast and faithful to God ; we shall find him faithful to us, in making good all the Promises which he hath made to us ; whether of Aid and Support, or of Recompence and Reward of our Fidelity to him.

I have begun to handle the *First* part of the Text, viz. The Apostles Exhortation to Christians to be constant and steady in their Religion : *Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering.* The Word ἀκίνητον which we render, *without wavering*, signifies inflexible and unmovable, not apt to waver and to be shaken with every Wind of contrary Doctrine, nor by the Blasts and Storms of Persecution. And that we might the better comprehend the full and true meaning of this Exhortation, I propounded to do these *Two* things.

1. To shew *Negatively*, wherein this Constancy and Steadiness in the Profession of the true Religion doth not consist. And

2. To shew *Positively*, what is implied and intended here by the Apostle,

Apostle, in holding fast, the Profession of our Faith without wavering.

1. To shew *Negatively*, wherein this Constancy and the Steadiness in the Profession of the true Religion doth not consist. This I spake to the last Day; and shewed at large, that there are *Two* things which are not contained and intended in this Exhortation.

1. That Men should not have the Liberty to examine their Religion, and to enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of it. Such I mean as are capable of this examination and enquiry; which some, I shewed, are not; as Children, who while they are in that state, are only fit to learn and believe what is taught them by their Parents and Teachers: And likewise such grown Persons, as either by the natural Weakness of their Faculties, or by some great Disadvantage of Education, are of a very low and mean Capacity and Improvement of Understanding. These are to be considered

sidered as in the condition of Children and Learners ; and therefore must of necessity trust and rely upon the Judgment of others.

2. This *holding fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, does not imply ; that when Men upon examination and enquiry are settled, as they think and verily believe in the true Religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any Reason that can be offer'd againg them. Both these Principles I shew'd to be unreasonable, and Arguments of a bad Cause and Religion.

I shall now proceed to explain the meaning of this Exhortation, *To hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering*, by shewing in the

Second place, what it is that is implied in the constant and steady Profession of the true Faith and Religion ; namely, That when upon due search and examination, we
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are fully satisfied, that it is the true Religion which we have embraced, or as St. Peter expresses it, *1st Epistle, 5. 12. That this is the true Grace of God, wherein we stand*; that then we should adhere steadfastly to it, and *hold it fast*, and not suffer it to be wrested from us, nor our selves to be moved from it, by any Pretences, or Insinuations, or Temptations whatsoever. For there is a great deal of difference between the Confidence and Steadfastness of an Ignorant Man, who hath never considered Things, and enquired into the Grounds of them; and the Assurance and Settlement of one, who hath been well instructed in his Religion, and hath taken pains to search and examine to the bottom, the Grounds and Reasons of what he holds, and professeth to believe. The first is meer Wilfulness and Obstinacy. A Man hath entertained, and drank in such Principles of Religion by Education, or hath taken them up by Chance; but he hath no Reason for them; and

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yet however he came by them, he is resolved to hold them fast, and not to part with them. The other is the Resolution and Constancy of a Wise Man. He hath embraced his Religion upon good Grounds, and he sees no Reason to alter it; and therefore is resolved to stick to it, and to *hold fast the Profession of it* stedfastly to the end. And to this purpose there are many Exhortations and Cautions scattered up and down the Writings of the holy Apostles; as that we should be *stedfast and unmoveable, established in the Truth, rooted and grounded in the Faith, and that we should hold fast that which is good, and not suffer our selves to be carried to and fro with every wind of Doctrine, through the slight of Men, and the cunning craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive; that we should not be removed from him that hath called us unto the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel; that we should stand fast in one Spirit and one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel, and be*
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n nothing terrified by our Adversaries ; and that, if occasion be, we should contend earnestly for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints ; and here in the Text, That we should hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering. For the explaining of this, I shall do two Things :

1. Consider *what* it is that we are to hold fast ; namely, *the profession of our Faith ; And,*

2. *How* we are to hold it fast, or what is implied in *holding fast the profession of our Faith, without wavering.*

1. *What* it is that we are to hold fast ; namely, *the profession of our Faith ; i. e. of the Christian Faith or Religion : For, I told you before, that this Profession or Confession of our Faith or Hope (as the word properly signifies) is an Allusion to that Profession of Faith which was made by all those who were admitted Members of the Christian Church by Ba-*

ptism; of which the Apostle makes mention immediately before the *Text*, when he says, *Let us draw near in full assurance of Faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our bodies washed with pure Water:* And then it follows, *Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering.* The *Profession of Faith* which we made in our Baptisms, and which by the Ancient Fathers is call'd the *Rule of Faith*, and which is now contain'd in that which we call the *Apostles Creed*, and which is called by St. Paul, Rom. 6. 17. *the Form of Doctrine which was delivered to them;* i. e. to all Christians; and 2 Tim. 1. 13. *the Form of sound Words;* Hold fast, saith he, *the Form of sound Words, which thou hast heard of me, in Faith and Love which is in Christ Jesus;* and by St. Jude, *The Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.*

So that it is the first and ancient Faith of the Christian Church, delivered to them by Christ and his Apostles, which we are here exhorted

to *hold fast* ; the necessary and fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith ; and by consequence all those Truths which have a necessary Connexion with those Articles, and are implied in them, and by plain Consequence are to be deduced from them. It is not the doubtful and uncertain Traditions of Men, nor the partial Dictates and Doctrines of any Church, since the Primitive Times, which are not contained in the Holy Scriptures and the Ancient Creeds of the Christian Church, but have been since declared and imposed upon the Christian World, though with never so confident a pretence of Antiquity in the Doctrines, and of Infallibility in the Proposers of them : These are no part of *that Faith* which we are either to *profess* or to *hold fast* ; because we have no reason to admit the Pretences, by virtue whereof those Doctrines or Practices are imposed ; being able to make it good, and having effectually done it, that those Doctrines are not of Primitive Antiquity ; and that the

Church which proposeth them, hath no more claim to Infallibility, than all other Parts of the Christian Church, which since the Apostles time is none at all.

In a word; No other Doctrines which are not sufficiently revealed in Scripture, either in express Terms, or by plain and necessary Consequence; nor any Rites of Worship, nor Matters of Practice, which are not commanded in Scripture, are to be esteemed any part of *that Faith* in Religion, *the Profession* whereof the Apostle here Commands all Christians to *hold fast without wavering*; much less any Doctrines or Practices, which are repugnant to the Word of God, and to the Faith and Practice of the first Ages of Christianity; of which kind I shall have occasion in my following Discourse to instance in several Particulars. In the mean time I shall only observe, That *that Faith* and Religion which we *profess*, and which by God's Grace we have ever *held fast*, is *that* which hath been acknowledged

knowledg'd by all Christian Churches in all Ages, to have been *the ancient Catholick and Apostolick Faith*, and cannot (as to any part or tittle of it) be denied to be so, even by the Church of *Rome* herself.

I proceed to the

II^d Thing which I propos'd to consider; namely, *how* we are to *hold fast the profession of our Faith*, or what is implied by the Apostle in this Exhortation, *To hold fast the profession of our Faith, without wavering*. And I think these following Particulars may very well be supposed to be implied in it.

1. That we should *hold fast the Profession of our Faith*, against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support their Confidence.

2. And much more against the Confidence of Men, contrary to Scripture,

pture, and Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind.

3. Against all the Temptations and Terrours of the World.

4. Against all vain Promises of being put into a safer Condition, and groundless Hopes of getting to Heaven upon easier terms in another Religion.

5. Against all the cunning Arts and Insinuations of busie and disputing Men, whose Design it is to unhinge Men from their Religion, and to gain Profelytes to their own Party and Faction. I shall go over these with as much Clearness and Brevity as I can.

1. We should *hold fast the Profession of our Faith*, against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support that Confidence. All Religion is either Natural or Instituted. The Rule of Natural Religion is the common Reason of Mankind:

kind: The Rule of Instituted Religion is divine Revelation, or the Word of God; which all Christians before the Council of *Trent* did agree to be contained in the Holy Scriptures. So that nothing can pretend to be Religion, but what can be proved to be so, One or both of those ways; either by Scripture, or by Reason, or by both. And how confident soever Men may be of Opinions destitute of this Proof; any Man that understands the Grounds of Religion, will without any more ado reject them, for want of this proof; and notwithstanding any pretended Authority or Infallibility of the Church that imposeth them, will have no more Consideration and Regard of them, than of the confident Dictates and Assertions of any Enthusiast whatsoever; because there is no reason to have regard to any Man's Confidence, if the Arguments and Reasons which he brings, bear no proportion to it. We see in Experience that Confidence is generally ill grounded, and is a kind of Passion in the Understanding, and is commonly made use of,

of, like Fury and Force, to supply for the weakness and want of Argument. If a Man can prove what he says by good Argument; there is no need of Confidence to back and support it. We may at any time trust a plain and substantial Reason, and leave it to make its own way, and to bear out its self. But if the man's Reasons and Arguments be not good; his Confidence adds nothing of real Force to them, in the Opinion of Wise men, and tends only to its own Confusion. Arguments are like Powder, which will carry and do execution according to its true strength; and all the rest is but noise. And generally none are so much to be suspected of Error, or a Design to deceive, as those that pretend most confidently to Inspiration and Infallibility: As we see in all sorts of Enthusiasts, who pretend to Inspiration, although we have nothing but their own word for it; for they work no Miracles. And all pretence to Inspiration and Infallibility, without Miracle, whether it be in particular Persons, or in whole Churches,

Churches, is Enthusiastical ; *i. e.* a Pretence to Inspiration without any Proof of it.

And therefore St. Paul was not moved by the Boasting and Confidence of the false Apostles ; because they gave no Proof and Evidence of their Divine Inspiration and Commission, as he had done ; for which he appeals to the Sense of Men, Whether he had not wrought great Miracles ; which the false Apostles had not done, though they had the confidence to give out themselves to be Apostles as well as he ; 2 Cor. 12. 11, 12. *I am (says he) become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me. And truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.* And Rev. 2. 2. Christ there commends the Church of Ephesus, because *she had tried them, which said they were Apostles, but were not ; and had found them liars.* And as we are not to believe every one that *says he is an Apostle,* so neither every one that pretends

tends to be a *Successor of the Apostles*, and to be endued with the same Spirit of Infallibility that they were: For these also, when they are tried whether they be the *Successors of the Apostles* or not, may be found *Liar*s, And therefore St. *John* cautions Christians *not to believe every spirit*, (that is, every one that pretends to divine Inspiration and the Spirit of God,) *but to try the Spirits, whether they be of God; because many false Prophets are gone out into the World*, 1 Joh. 4. 1. And therefore the Confidence of Men in this kind ought not to move us, when their Pretence to Infallibility is destitute of the proper Proof and Evidence of it; which is a Power of Miracles; and when their Doctrines and Practices have neither the evidence of Reason or Scripture on their side.

For instance; *That the Church of Rome is the Mother and Mistress of all Churches*; which is one of the new Articles of Pope *Pius* the IVth's Creed; and yet there is not one syllable

lable in Scripture tending to this purpose. And in Reason it cannot be, that any but that which was the First Christian Church should be the Mother of all Churches; and *that* the Church of *Rome* certainly was not, and the Church of *Jerusalem* undoubtedly was.

And then *that the Bishop of Rome, as Successor of St. Peter there, is the Supreme and Universal Pastor of Christ's Church by Divine appointment, as he assumes to himself; and that it is necessary to Salvation, for every humane Creature to be subject to the Bishop of Rome, as is declared in their Canon-Law by a Constitution of Pope Boniface the VIIIth, which Constitution is confirmed in the last Lateran Council; of all which there is not the least mention in Scripture, nor any divine Appointment to that purpose to be found there. And it is against Reason, that all the World should be obliged to trudge to Rome for the Decision of Causes and Differences, which in many and the most*

most weighty Matters are reserved to the Decision of that See, and can be determin'd no-where else. And against Reason likewise it is to found this universal Supremacy in his being Successor of St. *Peter*; and to fix it in the Bishop of *Rome*, rather than at *Antioch*; when it is certain, and granted by themselves, that St. *Peter* was first Bishop of *Antioch*, and out of all question that he was Bishop of *Antioch*; but not so, that he was Bishop of *Rome*.

Nor is there any thing in Scripture for *the Deliverance of Souls out of Purgatory by the Prayers and Masses of the Living*. The whole Thing is groundless, and not agreeable to the constant Suppositions of Scripture concerning a future State. Nor is there any Reason for it, besides that which is not fit to be given, the Wealth and Profit which it brings in.

The Invocation and Worship of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the Saints departed, is destitute of all Scripture-warrant or Example, and confessed by themselves not to have been owned or practised in the Three first Ages of the Church, because it looked too like the Heathen Idolatry; which deserves to be well considered by those, who pretend to derive their whole Religion from Christ and his Apostles by a continued and uninterrupted Succession. And this practice is likewise destitute of all colour of Reason; unless we be assured, that they hear our Prayers in all places; which we cannot be, unless they be present in all places, which they themselves do not believe; or that God doth some way or other reveal and make known to them the Prayers which are made to them, which we cannot possibly be assured of, but by some Revelation of God to that purpose; which we no-where find, nor doth the Church of Rome pretend to it.

But

But I proceed to the

2^d Thing ; namely, That we should much more *hold fast the Profession of our Faith* and Religion, against the Confidence of Men, contrary to Scripture, and Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind. For these are the chief grounds of Certainty, which we can have for or against any thing ; and if these be clearly on our side, we ought not to be much moved by the Confidence of Men, concerning any Doctrines or Practices of Religion, which are plainly contrary to these. If in Points wherein we have this advantage on our side, we do not *hold fast the Profession* of our Religion ; our Error and Folly are capable of no excuse. And this advantage we plainly have in several Points and Controversies betwixt us and the Church of Rome.

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As in *the Worship of Images* ; which is as expresly and clearly forbidden in the Second Commandment, and that without any Distinction, as any other thing is forbidden in the whole Bible. And that it is so forbidden in this Commandment, and that this Commandment is still in force among Christians, was the Universal Sense of the ancient Christian Church.

Prayers and the Service of God in an unknown Tongue are directly contrary to the very Nature and End of religious Worship, which ought to be a Reasonable Service ; which it cannot be, if it be not directed by our Understandings, and accompanied with our Hearts and Affections. But if it be performed in an unknown Tongue, our Understanding can have no part in it ; and if we do not understand it, it cannot move our Affections. And this likewise is plainly contrary to Scripture ; namely, to a large Discourse of St. Paul's,

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almost throughout a whole *Chapter*, where he purp sely sets himself to shew the Unprofitableness and gross Absurdity of Praying or Celebrating any other Part of Religious Worship, in an unknown Tongue. If any part of *Our Religion* had been half so clearly condemned in Scripture, as this is, (which yet is the constant and general Practice of the Church of *Rome*) we must have lain down in our shame, and confusion would have covered us; and we must either have rejected the Authority of the Bible, or have renounced that Point of our Religion, what-ever it had been: Though it had been dear to us as *our right Hand, and our right Eye*; we must upon such plain Evidence of Scripture against it, have cut it off, and plucked it out, and cast it from us.

The like may be said of *Locking up the Scriptures from the people in an unknown Tongue*; contrary to the Command of the Scriptures themselves, and to the great End and Design

sign of Almighty God in the Writing and Publishing of them; and contrary to the perpetual Exhortations and Counsels of all the Ancient Fathers of the Christian Church for a great many Ages, not one excepted. They are hardly more frequent, and copious, and earnest in any Argument; than in perswading People of all Ranks and Conditions, to the constant and careful Reading of the Holy Scriptures. And contrary to the Common Reason and Sense of Mankind. For what should Men be perswaded to be acquainted withal; if not with That which is the great Instrument of our Salvation? That Book which was written on purpose to reveal and convey to Men the Knowledge of God, and of his Will, and their Duty? What should Men be allowed to know; if not That which is the best and most effectual Means, to direct and bring them to Heaven, or turn them from Sin, and to preserve them from Eternal Misery? When our Saviour would represent the best and most

L 2 effectual

effectual Means of bringing Men to Happiness, and saving them from the Eternal Torments of Hell, in the Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*; He brings in *Abraham*, giving the best Advice he could to the Rich Man who was in Hell, concerning his Brethren that were upon Earth, how they might prevent their *coming into that place of Torment*; And he directs them to the Scriptures, as the best and most effectual Means to that purpose: *They have* (says he) *Moses and the Prophets: Let them hear them.*

Now if in the Church of God among the *Jews*, the same Course had been taken, that is now in the Church of *Rome*; the Rich Man might, and in all Reason ought to have replied, *Nay, Father Abraham; But they have not Moses and the Prophets, nor are they permitted to Read them in a Language that they can understand; And therefore this Advice is of no Use to them*: And then he might with Reason

Reason have press'd him, as he did, that *one might be sent to them from the Dead, to Testifie unto them.* But it appears, that *Abraham* was very positive and peremptory in this Advice; and that he prefers the Knowledge of the Scriptures, to any other Way and Means, that could be thought of; and that if this had not its Effect to perswade Men to Repentance, and to preserve them from Hell, he did not know any thing else, that was so likely to do it: For he concludes, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets; neither will they be perswaded tho One rose from the Dead.*

And this is the Conclusion of the Parable. Which plainly shews, what was the main Scope and Design of our Saviour in it; namely, to recommend to us the Use of the Holy Scriptures, as the best and most effectual Means, which the Wisdom of God hath provided for the Salvation of Mankind.

And now any Man would be apt to think, that the declared Judgment of our Saviour in the case, should go a great way, even with the most Infallible Church in the World. However, this we must say, that it is in truth a very hard case, to which the Church of *Rome* hath reduced Men; that it will neither allow them Salvation out of their Church, nor the best and most effectual Means of Salvation, when they are in it. I might say much more upon this Head; but this I hope may be sufficient.

The next Instance shall be in the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; which is contrary to the Scriptures; which after Consecration so frequently call, the Elements *Bread* and *Wine*; and which, without Reason or Necessity, puts an absurd and impossible Sense upon those words of our Saviour, *This is my Body*; which do no more prove *Transubstantiation* than those words, *This Cup is the New Testament*,
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do prove that the material Cup which was used in the Sacrament, was substantially changed into the New Testament; And no more, than those Texts which affirm God to have Eyes, and Ears, and Hands, do prove that he really hath so. But besides the Contrariety of this Doctrine to Scripture, nothing can be more repugnant to Reason. It is so big with Contradictions, and so surfeited of Impossibilities, that it would be Endless to reckon them up. And besides all this, it plainly contradicts the clear and constant Evidence of *Four* of our *Five* Senses; which whoever contradicts, undermines the Foundation of all Certainty.

And then the *Communion in one kind* is plainly contrary to our Saviour's Institution of the Sacrament in both kinds; as they themselves acknowledge. And therefore the Council of *Constance* being sensible of this, was forced to Decree it with an expresse *Non obstante* to the

Institution of Christ, and the Practice of the Apostles and the Primitive Church. And their Doctrine of *Concomitancy* (as if the Blood were in the Flesh, and together with it) will not help the matter : Because in the Sacrament Christ's Body is represented as broken, and pierced, and exhausted, and drain'd of its Blood; and his Blood is represented as shed and poured out; so that one Kind can by no means contain and exhibit both.

The next Instance is, the *Repetition of Christ's Propitiatory Sacrifice in the Mass*, so often as That is celebrated : Against all Reason; because the Sacrifice of Christ, once offered upon the Cross, was a full and perfect Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World; and therefore ought not, because it needs not, to be again repeated for that End, in any manner whatsoever. And it is directly contrary to the main Scope of a great part of this *Epistle to the Hebrews*, which shews the Excellency

lency of the Gospel above the Law in this respect, That the Expiatory Sacrifice of the Gospel was offered *once for all*; whereas the Sacrifices of the Law were perpetually repeated. Chap. 7. 27. Speaking of Christ; *who needs not daily, as those High-priests, to offer up Sacrifices; first for his own Sins, and then for the Peoples: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.* Chap. 9. 26. *But once in the End of the World hath he appeared, to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself: And as it is appointed for all Men once to dye; so Christ was once offered to bear the Sins of many.* And Chap. 10. 10. *By the which Will we are sanctified, through the Offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all: And Verse the 12. But this Man, after he had offered one Sacrifice for Sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.* And Verse the 14. *For by one Offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* There cannot be plainer Texts for any thing in the Bible, than that this Propitia-

Propitiatory Sacrifice was never to be repeated.

And whereas they say, that *the Sacrifice of the Mass is an unbloody Sacrifice*: This, instead of bringing them off, doth but intangle the Matter more. For if Blood be offered in the Sacrifice of the Mass, how is it an unbloody Sacrifice? What can be more bloody than Blood? And if Blood be not offered; how is it Propitiatory? Since the Apostle lays it down for a Certain Rule, That *without shedding of Blood, there is no Remission of Sins*: *i. e.* There can be no Propitiation for the Sins of the Living or the Dead, which the Church of Rome affirms there is.

I might have added one or two Instances more; and then should have proceeded to shew, in the *Third* place, That we are to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, against all the Temptations and Terrors of the World; which

which is **more** especially and principally here intended by the Apostle in this Exhortation.

But I shall proceed no farther at present.

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to be a more perfect Christian
and more devoted to the service
of his Master.

For I have found that the

only way to perfection is

to be constantly in the presence

of God, and to be constantly

in the exercise of His will.

For I have found that the

only way to perfection is

to be constantly in the presence

of God, and to be constantly

in the exercise of His will.

For I have found that the

only way to perfection is

to be constantly in the presence

of God, and to be constantly

in the exercise of His will.

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H E B. X. 23.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our
Faith without wavering ; for he is
faithful that promised.*

IN these words, I have told you,
are contained

I. An Exhortation, *to hold fast the
profession of our faith, or hope, without
wavering.*

II. An Argument or Encourage-
ment thereto ; *because he is faithful that
promised.* I am yet upon the first
of

of these; the Exhortation to Christians, to be Constant and Steady in the Profession of their Religion; *Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering.* And that we might the better comprehend the true and full meaning of this Exhortation, I shewed,

1. *Negatively*, what is not meant and intended by it. And I mentioned these *two* Particulars.

1. The Apostle doth not hereby intend, that those who are capable of enquiring into, and examining the Grounds of their Religion, should not have the Liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when upon due Enquiry and Examination, Men are settled, as they think and verily believe, in the true Faith and Religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any Reason that can be offered against their present Persuasion. Both these I shewed to be unreasonable, and
Argu-

Arguments of a bad Cause and Religion : And therefore neither of them can be intended by the Apostle in this Exhortation.

2. I proceeded *Positively* to explain the meaning of this Exhortation. And to this purpose I proposed,

1. To consider *what* it is, that we are to *hold fast*, viz. *the Confession or Profession of our Faith*. The ancient Christian Faith, of which every Christian makes *Profession* in his Baptism : For of That the Apostle here speaks, as appears by the Context ; not the doubtful and uncertain Traditions of Men, nor the imperious Dictates and Doctrines of any Church, not contained in the Holy Scriptures, imposed upon the Christian Church ; tho with never so confident a pretence of the Antiquity of the Doctrines proposed, or of the Infallibility of the Proposers of them. And then I proceeded in the

2. Place

2. Place, to shew *how* we are to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. And I mentioned these following Particulars, as probably implied in the Apostles Exhortation.

1. That we should *hold fast the Profession of our Faith*, against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support their Confidence.

2. And much more against the Confidence of Men, against Scripture and Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind.

3. Against all the Temptations and Terroures of the World.

4. Against all vain Promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless Hopes of getting to Heaven upon easier Terms, in another Religion.

5. Against all the cunning Arts and Insinuations of busy and disputing Men, whose design it is to unhinge Men from

from their Religion, and to gain Profelytes to their Party and Faction.

1. We are to hold fast the Profession of our Faith, against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support their Confidence. And of this I gave several Instances. As in the Pretence of the Church of Rome to *Infallibility*, without any Proof or Evidence of it, either by Scripture or Miracles: I mean such Miracles, as are sufficiently attested. For as for their Legends, since the wisest among themselves give no credit to them, I hope, they do not expect that We should believe them, or be moved by them. And then their Pretence that *the Church of Rome is the Mother and Mistress of all Churches*; which is now made an Article of their Creed. And that *the Bishop of Rome, as Successor of Saint Peter there, is by Divine Appointment the Supream and Universal Pastor of Christs Church.* And that it is
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necessary to Salvation, for every humane Creature to be subject to him. And lastly, their Invocation and Worship of the Blessed Virgin, and Saints departed; without any Warrant or Example of any such thing, either in Scripture, or in the practice of the first Ages of the Christian Religion; and without sufficient Ground to believe that they hear the Prayers which are put up to them.

2. Much more are we to hold fast the Profession of our Faith, against the Confidence of Men, contrary to Scripture and Reason and the common Sense of Mankind. And here I instanced in the *Worship of Images; the Locking up of the Scriptures from the People, and celebrating the publick Prayers and Service of God in an unknown Tongue; in their Doctrine of Transubstantiation; their Communion in one kind; and their daily repetition, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, of the Propitiatory Sacrifice of Christ; which was offered once for all, and is of Eternal Vir-*
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tue and Efficacy, and therefore ought not, because it needs not, like *Jewish* Sacrifices under the Law; to be repeated.

To these Instances, which I have already spoken to, I shall add *one* or *two* more; as namely, That *to the due Administration of the Sacraments, an Intention in the Minister at least to do what the Church does,* is requisite. This is expressly defined, and under an *Anathema* upon all that shall say otherwise, by the Council of *Trent*, *Sess. the Seventh, Can. 11th*; which is to make the Validity and Virtue of the Sacraments, to depend upon the Intention of the Priest or Minister. So that if in the Administration of Baptism, he do not intend to Baptize the Party he pretends to Baptize, then it is no Baptism; and consequently the Person Baptized is not made a Member of Christ's Church; nor is any Grace or special Benefit conferred upon him; nor is he a Christian. So likewise in the Sacrament of the Lord's

Supper, If the Priest do not intend to Consecrate the Host, then is it no Sacrament ; and they that receive it, receive no benefit by it ; and (which according to their Opinion is a dreadful Consequence) by the words of Consecration, there is no change made of the Elements into the Body and Blood of Christ ; and consequently they that give Adoration to the Sacrament in such cases, Worship Bread and Wine, for God ; which is Idolatry. And so likewise in their Sacrament of Penance, though the Priest pronounce the words of Absolution ; yet if he do not intend to absolve the Penitent ; though he be never so truly penitent, and God on his part is ready to forgive him ; yet if the Priest do not intend to do so, there is nothing done, and the Man is still in his Sin. So likewise in Ordination, (which is another of their Sacraments) if the Bishop do not intend to Ordain the Man ; he is no Priest, and all that he does as a Priest afterwards, either in Administration of Bâptism, or the Lords Supper,

or

or the Absolution of Penitents, all is vain and of no effect. Nay, in Marriage, (which they will needs have to be a Sacrament too) if the Intention of the Priest be wanting; there is nothing done, the Contract is null'd, and they that are so Married do really live in Adultery; though they do not know it, nor have any suspicion of it.

Now this is contrary to Scripture and the whole Tenure of the Gospel, which promiseth the benefit and efficacy of the Sacraments, to all those that perform the Conditions of the Covenant which are required on their parts, and declares forgiveness of Sins to those who confess them to God, and truly repent of them.

And there is not the least intimation given in the Bible, that the Virtue and Efficacy of the Sacraments does depend upon the Intention of him that administers them; or that the Forgiveness of sins is suspended upon the Intention or Absolution of

the Priest; but only upon the sincere Resolution of the Penitent. And surely nothing can be more absurd, and contrary to Reason, than that when Men have performed all the Conditions which the Gospel requires; yet they should notwithstanding this be deprived of all the Blessings and Benefits which God hath promised, and intends to confer upon them; because the Priest hath not the same Intention. So that when a Man hath done all he can to *work out his own Salvation*, he shall be never the nearer; only for want of That which is wholly out of his Power; the right Intention of the Priest.

Besides, that after all their Boasts of the safe Condition of Men in Their Church, and the most certain and infallible means of Salvation to be had in it; this one Principle (that the Intention of the Priest is necessary to the Validity and Virtue of the Sacraments) puts the Salvation of Men upon the greatest Hazard
and

and Uncertainty; and such as it is impossible for any Man either to discover or prevent, unless he had some certain way to know the Heart and Intention of the Priest. For upon these terms, who can know whether any Man be a Priest, and really ordained; or not? Nay, whether he be a Christian, and have been truly baptized; or not? and consequently whether any of his Admissions be valid, and we have any Benefit and Advantage by them? Because all this depends upon the knowledge of that, which we neither do nor can know.

So that when a Man hath conscientiously done all that God requires of any Man, to make him capable of Salvation; yet without any Fault of his, the want of Intention in an idle-minded Man may frustrate all: And though the Man have been baptized, and do truly believe the Gospel, and hath sincerely repented of his sins, and lived a most Holy Life; yet all this may signifie

nothing, and after all he may be no Christian; because his Baptism was invalid: And all the Promises of God to the means of Salvation which his Goodness and Wisdom hath prescribed, may be of no Efficacy; if the Priest do not intend in the Administration of the Sacraments to do that which God and the Church intend.

Now if this be true; there is certainly no Church in the World, in which the Salvation of Men runs so many hazards; and yet all this hazard and uncertainty has its rise, from a Scholastical Point, which is directly contrary to all the Notions of Mankind concerning the Goodness of God, and to the clear Reason of the thing, and to the constant Tenor of the Gospel; and which was never asserted by any of the ancient Fathers; much less defined by any Council before that of *Trent*: So that it is a Doctrine new and needless, and in the necessary consequences of it unreasonable and absurd to the utmost degree.

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The last Instance I shall mention, is *their Rule of Faith*. The Rule of Faith universally received and acknowledged by the Christian Church in all Ages, before the Council of *Trent*, was the Word of God, contained in the Canonical Books of Holy Scripture; which were therefore by the Church called *Canonical*, because they were the Rule of Faith and Manners, of the Doctrines to be believed, and the Duties to be practised by all Christians. But when the Errours and Corruptions of the *Romish* Church were grown to the highth, and the Pope and his Council at *Trent* were resolved not to Retrench and Reform them, they saw it necessary to enlarge and lengthen out their Rule; because the ancient Rule of the Holy Scriptures would by no means reach several of the Doctrines and Practices of that Church, which they were resolved to maintain and make good by one means or other: As namely, the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; of *Purgatory*; and of the *Seven Sacraments*

craments : and the practice of the *Worship of Saints, and Images* ; of the *Scriptures, and the Service of God in an unknown Tongue* ; of *Indulgences* ; and the *Communion in one kind* : and several other superstitious Practices in use among them.

Now to enlarge their Rule to the best advantage for the Justification of these Doctrines and Practices, they took these *two* ways.

1. They have added to the *Canonical Books* of the Old Testament, which were received by the *Jewish Church* (to whom were committed the *Oracles of God*) I say to these they have added several *Apocryphal Books*, not warranted by Divine Inspiration, because they were written after Prophecy and Divine Inspiration was ceased in the *Jewish Church*; *Malachi* being the last of their Prophets, according to the general Tradition of that Church. But because the addition of these Books did not make a Rule of Faith and Practice large

large enough for their purpose ; in imitation of the *Jews*, in the time of the greatest Confusion and Degeneracy of that Church, they added in the

Second Place to their Books of Scripture, which they call *the written Word*, an *unwritten Word* which they call *Oral Tradition* from Christ and his Apostles ; which they declare to be of equal Authority with the Holy Scriptures themselves ; and that it ought to be received with the same Pious Veneration and Affection : Of which Traditions, They being the Keepers and Judges, they may extend them to what they please, and having them in their own Breasts, they may declare whatever they have a mind to, to have been a constant and universal Tradition of their Church ; tho it is evident to common Sense, that nothing can be more uncertain, and more liable to Alteration and Mistake, than Tradition, at the distance of so many

ny Ages, brought down by word of mouth, without writing, and passing through so many hands. He that can think these to be of equal Certainty and Authority with what is delivered by Writing, and brought down by Books, undertakes the defence of a strange Paradox. viz. That *general Rumour and Report of Things said and done 1500 Years ago, is of equal Authority and Credit with a Record, and a written History.*

By which proceeding of the Council of *Trent* concerning the Rule of Faith and Practice; it is very evident, that they had no mind to bring their Faith to the Ancient Rule, the Holy Scriptures. That they knew could not be done; and therefore they were resolved to fit their Rule to their Faith. And this Foundation being laid in their first Decree, all the rest would afterwards go on very smoothly. For do but give Men the making of their Rule, and they can make
good

good any thing by it. And accordingly the Council of *Trent* having thus fixt and fitted a Rule to their own purpose ; in the Conclusion of that Decree, they give the World fair warning, upon what Grounds, and in what Ways they intend to proceed in their following Decrees of Practice, and Definitions of Faith. *Omnes itaque intelligent, quo ordine & via ipsa Synodus post jactum fidei confessionis fundamentum sit progressura, &c.* Be it known therefore to all men, in what Order and Way the Synod, after having laid this Foundation of the Confession of Faith, will proceed ; and what Testimonies and Proofs she chiefly intends to make use of, for the Confirmation of Doctrines, and Reformation of Manners in the Church. And no doubt all Men do see very plainly, to what purpose this Foundation is laid of so large a Rule of Faith. And this being admitted, how easie is it for them to confirm and prove whatever Doctrines and Practices they have a mind to establish ?

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But if this be a new, and another Foundation, than That which the Great Author and Founder of our Religion, hath laid and built his Church upon, (*viz.*) *the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles*; it is no matter what they build upon it. And if they go about to prove any thing by the new parts of this Rule; by the *Apocryphal Books* which they have added to the ancient *Canon* of the Scriptures, brought down to us by the general Tradition of the Christian Church; and by their pretended unwritten Traditions: we do with Reason reject this kind of Proof, and desire them first to prove their *Rule*, before they pretend to prove any thing by it: For we protest against this Rule, as never declared and owned by the Christian Church, nor proceeded upon by the ancient Fathers of the Church, nor by any Council whatsoever, before the Council of *Trent*.

In vain then doth the Church of *Rome* vaunt it self of the Antiquity

quity of their Faith and Religion; when the very Foundation and Rule of it is but of Yesterday; a new thing, never before known or heard of in the Christian World: Whereas the Foundation and Rule of *Our* Religion is the Word of God, contained in the Holy Scriptures; to which Christians in all Ages have appealed, as the *only* Rule of Faith and Life.

I proceed now to the

3. Thing I proposed, *viz.* that we are to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, against all the Temptations and Terrours of the World. And this seems more especially and principally to be here intended by the Apostle in this Exhortation.

I shall first speak of the Temptations of the World. And they are chiefly these *Two*; the Temptation of *Fashion and Example*: And of *worldly Interest and Advantage*.

1. Of

1. Of *Fashion and Example*. This in Truth and Reality is no strong Argument; and yet in Experience and Effect it is often found to be very powerful. It is frequently seen, that this hath many times too great an Influence upon weak and foolish Minds. Men are apt to be carried down with the Stream, and to *follow a Multitude* in that which is *evil*. But more especially Men are prone to be swayed by great Examples; and to bend themselves to such an Obsequiousness to their Superiours and Betters, that in compliance with them, they are ready not only to change their Affection to Persons and Things, as They do; but even their Judgment also; and that in the greatest and weightiest Matters, even in Matters of Religion, and the great concernments of another World. But this surely is an Argument of a poor and mean Spirit, and of a weak Understanding, which leans upon the Judgment of another, and is in truth the lowest degree of Servility,

vility, that a reasonable Creature can stoop to; and even beneath That of a Slave, who in the midst of his Chains and Fetters doth still retain the Freedom of his Mind and Judgment.

But I need not to urge this upon considerate Persons, who know better how to value their Duty and Obligation to God, than to be tempted to do any thing contrary thereto, meerly in compliance with *Fashion and Example*. There are some Things in Religion so very plain, that a wise and good Man would stand alone in the Belief and Practice of them, and not be moved in the least by the contrary Example of the whole World. It was a brave Resolution of *Joshua*; though all Men should forsake the God of *Israel*, and run aside to other Gods, yet he would not do it, *Joshua* 24. 15. *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord; chuse you this day whom you will serve: But as for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.* It was well resolv'd

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of Peter, if he had not been too confident of his own Strength, when he said to our Saviour, *Though all Men forsake thee, yet will not I.*

2. Another sort of Temptation, and which is commonly more Powerful than *Example*, is *worldly Interest and Advantage*. This is a mighty Bait to a great Part of Mankind, and apt to work very strongly upon the Necessities of some, and upon the Covetousness and Ambition of others. Some Men are tempted by Necessity, which many times makes them do ugly and reproachful Things, and like *Esau*, for a *Morsel of Meat* to sell *their Birth-right*, and Blessing. Covetousness tempts others to be of that Religion which gives them the prospect of the greatest Earthly Advantage, either for the increasing or securing of their Estates. When they find that *they cannot serve God and Mammon*; *they will forsake the one, and cleave*

to the other. This was one of the great Temptations to many in the Primitive Times, and a frequent Cause of Apostacy from the Faith; an eager Desire of Riches, and too great a Value for them; as St. Paul observes, *1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. But they that will be Rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition. For the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred, or been seduced from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows.* This was the Temptation which drew off Demas from his Religion; as St. Paul tells us, *2 Tim. 4. 10. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present World.*

Ambition, is likewise a great Temptation to proud and aspiring Minds, and makes many Men false to their Religion, when they find it a hinderance to their Preferment; and they are easily perswa-

ded, that That is the best Religion, which is attended with the greatest worldly Advantages, and will raise them to the highest Dignity. The Devil understood very well the Force of this Temptation, when he set upon our Saviour; and therefore reserv'd it for the last Assault. *He shewed him all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of them; and said to him, All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* And when he saw this would not prevail, he gave him over in despair, and left him. But though this be a very dazling Temptation; yet there are Considerations of that Weight to be set over-against it, from the Nature of Religion, and the infinite Concernment of it to our immortal Souls, as is sufficient to *quench this fiery Dart of the Devil*, and to put all the Temptations of this World out of Countenance, and to render all the Riches and Glory of it, in comparison of the Eternal Happiness and Misery of the other
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other World *but as the very sm ill Dust upon the Balance.* What Temptation of this World can stand against that Argument of our Saviour, if it be seriously weighed and considered; *What is a Man profited; if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?* If we would consider Things impartially, and weigh them in a just and equal Balance; the Things which concern our Bodies, and this present Life, are of no Consideration, in comparison of the great and vast Concernments of our immortal Souls, and the happy or miserable Condition of our Bodies and Souls to all Eternity.

And Religion is a Matter of this vast Concernment; and therefore not to be bargained away and parted with by us for the greatest Things this World can offer. There is no greater Sign of a sordid Spirit, than to put a high Va-

lue upon Things of little Worth; and no greater Mark of Folly, than to make an unequal Bargain, to part with Things of greatest Price for a slender and trifling Consideration: As if a Man of great Fortune and Estate, should sell the Inheritance of it for a Picture; which when he hath it, will not perhaps yield so much as will maintain him for one Year. The Folly is so much the greater, in Things of infinitely greater Value; as for a Man to quit God and Religion, to sell the Truth and his Soul, and to part with his Everlasting Inheritance, for a convenient Service, for a good Customer, and some present Advantage in his Trade and Profession, or indeed for any Condition which the foolish Language of this World cal's a *high Place*, or a *great Preferment*. The Things which these Men part with upon these cheap Terms, God, and his Truth, and Religion, are to those who understand themselves, and the just Value of their Immortal

tal Souls, Things of inestimable Worth, and not to be parted with by a considerate Man, for any Price that this World can bid. And those who are to be bought out of their Religion, upon such low Terms, and so easily parted from it, 'tis much to be feared that they have little or no Religion to *hold fast*.

2. As we are to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, against the Temptations and Allurements of this World; so likewise against the Terrors of it.

Fear is a Passion of great force; and, if Men be not very resolute and constant, will be apt to stagger them, and *to move them from their stedfastness*. And therefore when the Case of Suffering and Persecution for the Truth happens, we had need *to hold fast the Profession of our Faith*. Our Saviour in the Parable of the Sower tells us, that *there were many that heard the Word, and with joy received it: but when Per-*

secution and Tribulation arose because of the Word, presently they were offended.

And though, blessed be God, this be not now our Case; yet there was a Time when it was the general Case of Christians, in the first beginning of Christianity, and for several Ages after, though with some Intermision and Intervals of Ease. It was then a general Rule, and the common Expectation of Christians, *That through many Tribulations they must enter into the Kingdom of God; and that if any Man will live Godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer Persecution.* And in several Ages since those Primitive Times, the sincere Professors of Religion have, in divers places, been exposed to most grievous Sufferings and Persecutions for the Truth. And even at this day, in several Places, the faithful Servants of God are exercised with the sharpest and forest Tryals that perhaps were ever heard of in any Age;

Age; and for the sake of God, and the constant Profession of his true Religion, are *tormented and killed all the day long, and are accounted as Sheep for the slaughter.* It is Their hard Lot to be called to these cruel and bitter Sufferings; and Our happy Opportunity to be call'd upon for their Relief; Those of them, I mean, that have escaped that terrible Storm and Tempest, and have taken Refuge and Sanctuary here among us, and out of His Majesty's great Humanity and Goodness are by his Publick Letters recommended to the Charity of the whole Nation, by the Name of *Distressed Protestants.*

Let us consider how much easier Our Lot and Our Duty is, than Theirs; as much as it is easier to compassionate the Sufferings, and to relieve the Distresses of Others, than to be such Sufferers, and in such Distress Our Selves. Let us make Their Case our Own; and then we our selves will be the best Judges, how it is fit for us to demean our selves towards

wards them, and to what degree we ought to extend our Charity and Compassion to them. Let us put on their Case and Circumstances; and suppose that We were the Sufferers, and had fled to Them for Refuge: the same Pity and Commiseration, the same tender Regard and Consideration of our sad Case, the same liberal and effectual Relief that we should desire and expect, and be glad to have shewn and afforded to our selves; let us give to them; and then I am sure they will want no fitting Comfort and Support from us.

We enjoy (blessed be the Goodness of God to us) great Peace and Plenty, and Freedom from Evil and Suffering: And surely one of the best Means, to have these Blessings continued to us, and our *Tranquility prolonged*, is, to consider and relieve those who want the Blessings which we enjoy; and the readiest way to provoke

voke God to deprive us of these Blessings, is, to shut up the Fountains of our Compassion from our Distressed Brethren. God can easily change the Scene, and make our Sufferings, if not in the same kind, yet in one kind or other equal to theirs; and then we shall remember the Afflictions of Joseph, and say as his Brethren did, when they fell into Trouble, *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this Distress come upon us.*

God alone knows what Storms the Devil may yet raise in the World, before the End of it: And therefore it concerns all Christians, in all Times and Places, who have taken upon them the Profession of Christ's Religion, to consider well before-hand, and to calculate the Dangers and Sufferings it may expose them to, and to arm our selves with Resolution and

and Patience against the fiercest Assaults of Temptation ; considering the Shortness of all Temporal Afflictions and Sufferings, in comparison of the Eternal and Glorious Reward of them ; and the Lightness of them too, in comparison of the endless and intolerable Torments of another World ; to which every Man exposeth himself, who forsakes God, and renounceth his Truth, and wounds his Conscience, to avoid Temporal Sufferings.

And though *Fear* in many Cases, especially if it be of Death and extream Suffering, be a great Excuse for several Actions ; because it may, *Cadere in constantem virum*, happen to a resolute Man : Yet in this case, of Renouncing our Religion (unless it be very sudden and surprizing, out of which a Man recovers himself when he comes to himself (as *St. Peter* did) or the Suffering be so extream, as to put a Man besides himself for the
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the time, so as to make him say or do any thing;) I say in this case of Renouncing God and his Truth, God will not admit *Fear* for a just excuse of our Apostacy; which, if it be unrepented of, (and the Scripture speaks of Repentance in that case as very difficult) will be our Ruin. And the Reason is; because God has given us such fair Warning of it, that we may be prepared for it, in the Resolution of our Minds: And we enter into Religion upon these Terms, with a professed Expectation of Suffering, and a firm Purpose to lay down our Lives for the Truth, if God shall call us to it. *If any Man will be my Disciple, says our Lord, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me: And again, He that loveth Life it self more than me, is not worthy of me: And if any Man be ashamed of me, and of my Words, in this unfaithful Generation, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and the Holy Angels.*

And

And therefore to master and subdue this *Fear*, our Saviour hath propounded great Objects of Terror to us, and a Danger infinitely more to be dreaded, which every Man runs himself wilfully upon, who shall quit the Profession of his Religion, to avoid Temporal Sufferings; *Luke 12. 4, 5. Fear not them that can kill the Body, but after that have nothing that they can do: But I will tell you whom you shall fear. Fear him, who after he hath killed, can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell: Yea, I say unto you, Fear him. And to this dreadful Hazard every Man exposeth himself, who, for the Fear of Men, ventures thus to offend God. These are the Fearful and Unbelievers spoken of by St. John, Who shall have their Portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.*

Thus you see how we are to hold fast the Profession of our Faith
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without wavering, against all Temptations and Terrors of this World. I should now have proceeded to the next Particular; namely, that we are to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith*, against all vain Promises of being put into a safer Condition, and groundless Hopes of getting to Heaven upon easier Terms, in some other Church and Religion.

But this I shall not now enter upon.

without wavering, against all Temptations and Terrors of the World. I should now have proceeded to the next Particular; namely, that we are to hold fast the Profession of our Faith, against all such Persecutions of being put into a Prison, or banishment, and through all these of going to Heaven, and other things, in some other Church and Religion.

But this I shall not now enter upon.

S E R M O N

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H E B. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised.

IN these Words, I have told you, are contained these *Two Parts* :

I. An Exhortation, *To hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering.*

II. An Argument or Encouragement thereto ; *Because he is faithful that hath promised.* I am yet upon the

First of these, the Exhortation to Christians, to be Constant and Steady in the Profession of their Religion ; *Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering.* And that we might the

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better comprehend the true and full meaning of this Exhortation, I shewed,

I. *Negatively*, what is not meant and intended by it : And I mentioned these *Two* Particulars :

1. The Apostle doth not hereby intend, that those who are capable of enquiring into, and examining the Grounds and Reasons of their Religion, should not have the liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when upon due Enquiry and Examination, Men are settled, as they think and verily believe, in the True Faith and Religion ; they should obstinately refuse to hear any Reason that can be offered against their present Persuasion ; for Reason when it is fairly offered is always to be heard. I proceeded in the

Second Place, Positively to explain the Meaning of this Exhortation : And to this purpose I proposed to consider,

1. *What* it is that we are to hold fast ; viz. *the Confession or Profession of our Faith* : The Ancient Christian Faith which every Christian makes Profession of in his Baptism ; Not the Doubtful and Uncertain Traditions of Men, nor the Imperious Dictates and Doctrines

Strines of any Church (which are not contained in the Holy Scriptures) imposed upon the Christian World, though with never so confident a Pretence of the Antiquity of the Doctrines, or of the Infallibility of the Proposers of them. And then I proceeded, in the

Second Place, to shew how we are to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering: And I mentioned these following Particulars, as probably implied and comprehended in the Apostles Exhortation.

1. That we should hold fast the Profession of our Faith, against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support that Confidence.

2. And much more against the Confidence of Men, contrary to plain Scripture, and Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind; under both which Heads I gave several Instances of Doctrines and Practices imposed with great Confidence upon the World, some without, and others plainly against Scripture, and Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind.

3. Against all the Temptations and and Terrours of the World; the Temptations of Fashion and Example, and of

worldly Interest and Advantage ; and against the Terrours of Persecution and Suffering for the Truth. Thus far I have gone. I shall now proceed to the *Two* other Particulars which remain to be spoken to.

4. We are to hold fast the profession of our Faith, against all vain Promises of being put into a safer Condition, and groundless Hopes of getting to Heaven upon easier Terms, in some other Church and Religion. God hath plainly declared to us in the holy Scriptures, upon what Terms and Conditions we may obtain Eternal Life and Happiness, and what will certainly exclude us from it ; That *except we repent, (i.e.)* without true Contrition for our Sins, and forsaking of them, *we shall perish* : That *without Holiness no man shall see the Lord* : That *no Fornicator, or Adulterer, or Idolater, or Covetous Person, nor any one that lives in the practice of such sins, shall have any Inheritance in the Kingdom of God or Christ*. There is as great and unpassable a Gulf fixt between Heaven and a wicked Man; as there is betwixt Heaven and Hell. And when Men have done all they can to debauch and corrupt the Christian Doctrine, it is impossible to reconcile a wicked

wicked Life with any reasonable and well-grounded Hopes of Happiness in another World. No Church hath that Priviledge, to save a Man upon any other Terms, than those which our Blessed Saviour hath declared in his holy Gospel. All Religions are equal in this; That a bad Man can be Saved in none of them.

The Church of Rome pretends their Church and Religion to be the only safe and sure way to Salvation; and yet, if their Doctrine be true, concerning the Intention of the Priest, (and if it be not, they are much to blame in making it an Article of their Faith) I say, if it be true, that the Intention of the Priest is necessary to the Validity and Virtue of the Sacraments; then there is no Religion in the World, that runs the Salvation of Men upon more and greater Hazards and Uncertainties, and such as by no Care and Diligence of Man in working out his own Salvation, are to be avoided and prevented.

As for the easier Terms of Salvation which they offer to Men, they signifie nothing, if they be not able to make them good; which no Man can reasonably believe they can do, that hath read

the Bible, and doth in any good measure understand the Nature of God, and the Design of Religion. For Instance; That after the long Course of a most lewd and flagitious Life, a Man may be reconciled to God, and have his Sins forgiven at the last Gasps, upon Confession of them to the Priest, with that imperfect degree of Contrition for them, which they call *Attrition*, together with the Absolution of the Priest.

Now *Attrition* is a Trouble for Sin, meerly for fear of the Punishment of it. And this, together with *Confession*, and the *Absolution* of the Priest, without any Hatred of Sin for the Evil and Contrariety of it to the holy Nature and Law of God, and without the least Spark of Love to God, will do the Sinner's business, and put him into a state of Grace and Salvation, without any other Grace or Disposition for Salvation, but only the Fear of Hell and Damnation. This, I confess, is easie; but the great Difficulty is, to believe it to be true. And certainly, no man that ever seriously considered the Nature of God and Religion, can ever be persuaded to build the Hopes of his Salvation upon such a *Quick-sand*. The Absolution of all

all the Priests in the World will not procure the Forgiveness of God for any Man, that is not disposed for his Mercy by such a Repentance as the Gospel requires; which I am sure is very different from that which is required by the Council of Trent.

They that offer Heaven to Men upon so very large and loose Terms, give great Cause to suspect, that they will never make good their Offer; the Terms are so unreasonably cheap and easie, that there must be some Fraud and False Dealing. And on the other hand, nothing ought to recommend our Religion more to a wise and considerate Man; than that the Terms of Salvation which we propose to Men, viz. Faith, and Repentance, and a sincere Obedience to the Precepts of the Gospel, manifested in the Tenure of a Holy and Virtuous Life, are not only perfectly agreeable to the plain and constant Declaration of Holy Scripture; but do likewise naturally tend to engage Men most effectually to a good Life, and thereby to make them *meet to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. And therefore every body ought to be afraid of a Religion, which makes

such lavish Offers of Salvation, and to take heed how he ventures his Soul upon them. For if, after all the Hopes that are given of Salvation upon such and such Terms, the Sinner do really miscarry and miss of Heaven; it is but very ill Comfort to him, to be put into a *Fools Paradise*, for a Minute or two before he leaves the World, and the next Moment after to find himself in the place of Torments. I proceed to the

5. And *Last* Particular I mentioned, as implied in the Exhortation here in the Text, *viz.* That we *hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering*, against all the cunning Arts and Insinuations of busie and disputing Men, whose Design it is to unhinge Men from their Religion, and to gain Profelytes to their Party and Faction. To this purpose there are several Cautions given by our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles. *Matth. 24. 4. Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my Name, and shall deceive many.* *Eph. 4. 14. That ye henceforth be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the slight of men: οὐ τῇ κούβητι (the Word signifies the Cunning of Gamesters at Dice;) by the slight of Men, and the cunning*

cunning Craftiness whereby they lye in wait to deceive. And Chap. 5. 6. Let no man deceive you with vain Words. Col. 2. 8. Beware lest any man spoil you through Philosophy and vain Deceit; that is, by Sophistry and vain Reasoning, under a pretence of Philosophy. Heb. 13. 9. Be not carried about with divers and strange Doctrines. 2 Pet. 3. 17. Beware lest you also, being led away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. And this Caution is enforce'd by an expresse Prediction of a great Apostasie which should happen in the Christian Church, by which many should be seduced, by pretence of Miracles, and by several Arts of Deceit and Falshood. This Apostasie St. Paul expressly foretels, 2 Thess. 2. 1, 2, 3. We beseech you, Brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by Spirit (that is, by pretence to Inspiration) nor by Word (or Message) nor by Letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that Day shall not come, except there come a falling away, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition. And after a particular Description of him, he adds,

v. 9. *Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and lying Wonders, and in all deceitfulness of Unrighteousness in them that perish.* From all which he concludes, v. 15. *Therefore, Brethren, stand fast.*

The particular nature and kind of this Apostasie the same Apostle describes more fully, 1 Tim 4: 1, 2, 3. *Now the Spirit speaketh exprestly, that in the latter times some shall apostatize from the Faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits and Doctrines of Devils, speaking Lies in Hypocrisie, (i. e. under a great Pretence of Sanctity, spreading their pernicious Errors) forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats.* This is a very lively and pat Description of that great Apostasie in the Christian Church, which began in the Western Part of it, and hath spread it self far and wide. For there the Spirit of Error and Falshood has prevailed, under an Hypocritical Pretence of their being the only True Church and True Christians in the World: There Marriage, and several sorts of Meat, are forbidden to several Ranks and Orders of Men. All the Difficulty is, what is here meant by *Doctrines of Devils*; and these certainly

can be no other than Doctrines tending to Idolatry, which the Scripture every where doth in a particular manner ascribe to the Devil, as the Inventer and great Promoter of it. And this is very much confirmed by what we find added in some ancient Greek Copies in this Text, which runs thus: *In the latter times some shall apostatize from the Faith; for they shall worship the Dead, as some also in Israel worshipped.* And then it follows, *giving heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Devils.* So that the particular kind of Idolatry, into which some part of the Christian Church should apostatize, is here pointed at: That they should worship Souls departed, or the Spirits of dead Men; which was part of the Heathen Idolatry, into which the People of Israel did frequently relapse, So that the Spirit of God doth here foretel such an Apostasie in some part of the Christian Church as the People of Israel were guilty of, in falling into the Heathen Idolatry. *They shall be Worshipers of the Dead, as the Israelites also were.*

And this is the great and dangerous Seduction which the Christians are so much cautioned against in the New Testament, and charged to hold fast the
profession

profession of the Faith against the cunning Arts and Insinuations of seducing Spirits; not but (as I said before) that we are always to have an Ear open to Reason, and to be ready to hearken and to yield to That, whenever it is fairly proposed: But to be over-reached and rooked out of one's Religion, by little Sophistical Arts and Tricks, is Childish and silly. After we are, upon due Trial and Examination of the Grounds of our Religion, settled and established in it, we ought not to suffer our selves to be removed from it, by the groundless Pretences of Confident People to Infallibility, and to be practised upon by *Cunning Men, who lie at catch* to make Proselytes to their Party. This is to be like *Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine.*

And we ought to be the more careful of our selves; because there never was any time, wherein seducing Spirits were more bold and busie to pervert Men from the Truth. Against These we should hold fast our Religion, as a Man would do his Money in a Crowd. It passeth in the World for a great Mark of Folly, when a Man and his Money are soon parted. But it is a sign of much greater Folly,

Folly, for a Man easily to quit his Religion; especially to be caught by some such gross Methods, as the Seducers I am speaking of commonly use, and which lie so very open to Suspicion; such as ill-designing Men are wont to practise upon a young Heir, when they have insinuated themselves into his Company, to make a Prey of him. They charge him to tell no body in what Company he hath been; not to ask the Counsel and Advice of his Friends concerning what they have been persuading him to; because they, for their own Interest, will be sure to dissuade him from it. Just thus do these Seducers practise upon weak People. They charge them not to acquaint their Minister, with whom they have been, nor what Discourse they have had about Religion, nor what Books have been put into their Hands; because then, all their kind Design and Intention towards them will be defeated. But above all, they must be sure to read no Books on the other side, because they are no competent Judges of Points of Faith; and this reading on both sides will rather confound, than clear their Understandings. They tell them, that they have stated the matter truly, and
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would not for all the World deceive them ; and they may easily perceive, by their earnest Application to them, that nothing but Charity, and a passionate desire of the Salvation of their Souls, makes them take all these Pains with them. But this is so gross a way of proceeding, that any Man of common understanding must needs discern by this kind Treatment, that these Men can have no honest Design upon them.

To come then to a more particular Consideration of the Arts and Methods which they use (I mean particularly those of the Church of *Rome*) in making Profelytes to their Religion: As,

1. In allowing them to be very competent and sufficient Judges for themselves, in the Choice of their Church and Religion, (that is, which is the True Church and Religion, in which alone Salvation is to be had) and yet telling them at the same time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular Doctrines, and Points of Faith and Practice ; but for these, they must rely upon the Judgment of an Infallible Church, when they are in it ; otherwise they will certainly run into damnable Errors and Mistakes about these things.

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And they must of necessity allow them to be sufficient Judges for themselves in the Choice of their Religion; as will be evident, by considering in what Method they proceed with their intended Proselyte.

They propose to him to change his Church and his Religion, because he is in the wrong; and they will shew him a better, and such a one as is the only True one, and in which alone Salvation is to be had. To perswade him hereto, they offer him some Reasons and Arguments, or give him Books to read, containing Arguments to move him to make this Change, to satisfy him of the Reasonableness, and to convince him of the Necessity of it.

Now by this way of proceeding (and they can take no other) they do, whether they will or no, make the Person, whom they are endeavouring to convert, a Judge for himself, which Church and Religion is best; that which they would have him embrace and come over to, or that which they would perswade him to forsake. For to what end else do they offer him Reasons and Arguments to perswade him to leave our Church, and to come over to theirs; but that he may
consider

consider the Force and Weight of them ; and having considered them, may judge whether they be of force sufficient to over-rule him to make this Change ? So that as unwilling as they are to make particular Persons judge for themselves about Points of Faith, and about the Sense of Scripture confirming those Points (because this is to leave every Man to his own private Spirit and Fancy, and giddy Brain) yet they are compelled by Necessity, and against their own Principles, to allow a Man, in this case of chusing his Religion, to be a Judge of the Reasons and Arguments which they offer to induce him thereto. So that, whether they will or no, they must permit him to be a Judge for himself for *this once*, but not to make a Practice of it, or to pretend this Privilege ever after : For in acknowledgment of this great Favour, of being permitted to judge for himself *this once*, (which they do unwillingly grant him, and upon meer Necessity) he is for ever after to resign up his Judgment to the Church. And tho this Liberty be allowed *pro hac vice*, and properly *to serve a turn*, i. e. in order to the changing of his Religion ; yet he is to understand,

stand, that he is no fit and competent Judge of particular Points of Faith; these he must all learn from the True Church when he is in it, and take them upon her Authority; and in so doing he shall do very prudently, because She is infallible, and cannot be deceived; but He may.

But is there any Sense in all this, that a Man should be very fit and able to judge of that which they esteem the main and fundamental Point of all, namely, which is the True Church and Religion; and of the Reasons and Arguments whereby they pretend to demonstrate it; and of the true Meaning of those Texts of Scripture, whereby they pretend to prove theirs to be the only True Church: and yet should be wholly unable to judge of particular Points of Faith; or of the True Sense of any Texts of Scripture that can be produced for the Proof of those Points?

Is it so very prudent, in all the particular Points of Faith, for a Man to rely upon the Judgment of the Church, because She is infallible; and not to trust his own Judgment about them, because He is fallible, and may be deceived? And is

it prudent likewise for this Man to trust his own Judgment in the main Business of all ; namely, Which is the true Church and Religion ; concerning which he is as fallible in his Judgment, and as liable to be deceived, as in the Particular Points ? And if he be mistaken in the main Point, they must grant his Mistake to be fatal ; because his Sincerity, as to all the rest, depends upon it. This is a great Mystery and Riddle ; that every particular Man should have so sufficient a Judgment as to this main and fundamental Business, Which is the True Church and Religion ; and should have no Judgment at all about particular Points, fit to be trusted and relied upon ! As if there were a certain Judgment and Prudence, *quoad hoc* ; and as if all Men's Understandings were so framed, as to be very judicious and discerning in this main Point of Religion ; but to be weak, and dangerous, and blind, as to all particular Points : Or, as if a Man might have a very good Judgment, and be fit to be trusted and relied upon, before he come into their Church ; but from the very moment he enters into it, his Judgment were quite lost and good for nothing ! For this

this in effect and by interpretation they say, when they allow a Man to be very able to judge which is the true Church and Religion; but so soon as he hath discovered and embraced that, to have no Judgment of his own afterwards of any Point of Religion whatsoever; and a very tempting Argument it is to any Man that hath Judgment, to enter into that Church.

2. Another Art they use with their intended Profelyte, in order to his making a right choice of his Religion, is to caution him, to hear and read only the Arguments and Books which are on one side. But now admitting their designed Profelyte to be just such a Judge, and so far as they will allow him to be, and no farther, *viz.* Which is the true Church; but to have no Fitness and Ability at all to judge of particular Points of Faith; yet methinks they put a very odd Condition, and untoward Restraint upon this Judge, in telling him, (as they certainly use to do those whom they would pervert) That he must have no Discourse, nor read any Books, but only on that side which they would gain him to; because that

is the way to perplex and confound him, so that he shall never be able to come to a clear Judgment and Resolution in the Matter. But will any Man admit this way of proceeding in a Temporal Cause? This is just as if in a Cause of the greatest consequence, the Counsel on one side should go about to persuade the Judge, that it is only fit to hear what he hath to say in the Cause; that he will open it very plainly, and state the Matter in difference so clearly and impartially, and bring such strong Reasons and Proofs for what he says, that he shall not need to hear any thing on the other side, but may proceed to Judgment without any more ado: But if when the matter is thus laid before him so plainly, and is even ripe for Judgment, he will trouble himself needlessly to hear the other side; this will cast him back where they first began, and bring the Matter to an endless wrangling, and so confound and puzzle his Understanding, that he shall never be able to pass any clear Judgment in the Cause.

What think we would a Judge say to such a bold and senseless Pleader?

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The Case is the same, and the Absurdity every whit as gross and palpable, in pressing any Man to make a Judgment in a Matter which infinitely more concerns him, upon hearing only the Reasons and Arguments on one side.

3. Another Art which they use in making Profelytes, is to possess them, that there is but One thing that they are mainly concern'd to enquire into, and that is this; Since there is but one true Catholick Church of Christ upon Earth, out of which there is no Salvation to be had; Which that True Church is; And when they have found that out, that will teach them in a most Infallible way the True Faith and Religion, and all things that are necessary to be believed or done by them, in order to their Salvation; so that they have nothing to do, but to satisfy themselves in this single Enquiry; Which is the True Catholick Church of Christ? This is the *Unum necessarium*, the one thing necessary; and when they have found out this, and are satisfied about it, they need to enquire no farther; this Church will fully instruct and satisfy them in

all other things. And this I cannot deny to be a very Artificial way of proceeding, and to serve their purpose very well; for they have these two great Advantages by it.

1. That it makes the work short, and saves them a great deal of labour, by bringing the whole Business to one single Enquiry: and when they have gained this Point, that this single Question is all that they need to be satisfied in; then they have nothing to do, but to ply and puzzle the Man with their Motives of Credibility, and Marks of the true Church; and to shew, as well as they can, how these Marks agree to Their Church, and are all to be found in it, and in no other; and to set out to the best advantage the Glorious Priviledges of Their Church, the Miraculous things that have been and are still daily done in it, and the innumerable multitude of their Saints and Martyrs: and if these General Things take and sink into them, their work is in effect done.

2. Another great Advantage they have by it, is, That by bringing them to this Method, they divert and keep them off from the many Objections against their

their Church and Religion, namely, the Errors and Corruptions which we charge them withal. For this is the thing they are afraid of, and will by no means be brought to; to vindicate and make good their Innovations in Faith and Practice, so plainly in many things contrary to Scripture, and to the Faith and Practice of the Primitive Church; as the Doctrines of *Transubstantiation*, of *Purgatory*, the *Popes Supremacy*, of the *Infallibility of their Church*, of their *Seven Sacraments* Instituted by Christ, and of the *Intention of the Priest* being necessary to the Validity and Virtue of the Sacraments: and then several of their Practices; as of the *Worship of Images*, of the *Invocation of Angels and Saints*, of the *Service of God and the Scriptures in an Unknown Tongue*, and the *Communion in one Kind*; and several other things, so plainly contrary to the Scriptures, and the Practice and Usage of the Primitive Church, that almost the meanest Capacity may easily be made sensible and convinced of it. These are fore places, which they desire not to have touched, and therefore they use all possible Artifice, to keep

Men at a distance from them; partly because the particular discussion of them is tedious, and it requires more than ordinary Skill, to say any thing that is tenable for them, and so to paint and varnish them over, as to hide the Corruptions and Deformities of them; but chiefly, because they are conscious to themselves, that as in all these Points they are upon the Defensive, so they are also upon very great Disadvantages; and therefore to avoid, if it be possible, being troubled with them, they have devised this shorter, and easier, and more convenient way of making Profelytes.

Not that they are always able to keep themselves thus within their Trenches; but are sometimes, whether they will or no, drawn out to Encounter some of these Objections: but they rid themselves of them as soon, and as dexterously as they can, by telling those that make them, that they will hereafter give them full Satisfaction to all these Matters, when they are gotten over the first and main Enquiry; Which is the true Church? For if they can keep them to this Point, and gain them

them to it, they can deal with them more easily in the rest; for when they can once swallow this Principle, That the Church of *Rome* is the One True Catholick Church, and consequently, as they have told them all along, Infallible; this Infallibility of the Church once entertained, will cover a multitude of particular Errors and Mistakes; and it will very much help to cure the weakness and defects of some particular Doctrines and Practices, and at least to silence and over-rule all Objections against them. So that the benefit and advantage of this Method is visibly and at first sight very great; and therefore no wonder they are so steady and constant to it, and do so obstinately insist upon it. But how convenient soever it be to them; it is, I am sure, very unreasonable in it self; and that upon these Accounts.

I. Because the True Church doth not constitute and make the True Christian Faith and Doctrine; but it is the True Christian Faith and Doctrine, the Profession whereof makes the True Church; and therefore in Reason and Order of Nature, the first Enquiry must be,

be; What is the True Faith and Doctrine of Christ, which by him was delivered to the Apostles, and by them publish'd and made known to the World, and by their Writings Transmitted and Conveyed down to us? And this being found, every Society of Christians which holds this Doctrine, is a True Part of the Catholick Church; and all the Christians throughout the World that agree in this Doctrine, are the One True Catholick Church.

2. The Enquiry about the True Church can have no Issue, even according to their own way of proceeding, without a due Examination of the particular Doctrines and Practices of that Church, the Communion whereof they would perswade a Man to embrace. We will admit at present this to be the first Enquiry; Which is the True Church? Let us now see in what way they manage this, to gain Men over to their Church. They tell them, that the Church of *Rome* is the One True Catholick Church of Christ. The truth of this Assertion we will particularly examine afterwards, when we come to consider the next step
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of their Method, in dealing with their Converts. At present I shall only take notice in the General, what way they take to prove this Assertion; namely, That the Church of *Rome* is the One True Catholick Church; and that is, by the Notes and Marks of the True Church, which they call their *Motives of Credibility*; because by these they design to perswade them, that the Church of *Rome* is the One True Catholick Church. I shall not now reckon up all the Notes and Marks which they give of the True Church; but only observe, that one of their Principal Marks of the True Church is this; That the Faith and Doctrine of it be agreeable to the Doctrine of the Primitive and Apostolick Church, (*i. e.*) to the Doctrine delivered by our Saviour and his Apostles: And this *Bellarmino* makes one of the Marks of the True Church. And they must unavoidably make it so; because the True Faith and Doctrine of Christ, is that which indeed Constitutes the True Church. But if this be an Essential Mark of the True Church; then no Man can possibly know the Church of *Rome* to be the True Church, till he have examin'd

min'd the particular Doctrines and Practices of it, and the Agreement of them with the Primitive Doctrine and Practice of Christianity; and this necessarily draws on and engages them in a dispute of the particular Points and Differences betwixt us; which is the very thing they would avoid by this Method, and which I have now plainly shewed they cannot do; because they cannot possibly prove their Church to be the True Church, without shewing the Conformity of their Doctrines and Practices, to the Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive and Apostolick Church; and this will give them work enough, and will, whether they will or no, draw them out of their Hold and Fastness; which is to amuse People with a general Enquiry, Which is the true Church; without descending to the Examination of their particular Doctrines and Practices. But this they must of necessity come to, before they can prove by the Notes and Marks of the True Church, that theirs is the True Church.

And this is a Demonstration, that their Method of Satisfaction, as it is Un-
natural

natural and Unreasonable; so it cannot serve the purpose they aim at by it; which is, to divert Men from the Examination of the particular Points in Difference between the Church of Rome and Us, and to gain them over to them by a wile and trick; because the very Method they take to prove themselves to be the True Catholick Church, will enforce them to justify all their particular Doctrines and Practices, before they can finish this Proof.

And here we fix our foot; That the single Question and Point, upon which they would put the whole Issue of the Matter, cannot possibly be brought to any reasonable Issue, without a particular Discussion and Examination of the Points in Difference betwixt Their Church and Ours: and when they can make out these to be agreeable to the Primitive Doctrine and Practice of the Christian Church; we have reason to be satisfied, that the Church of Rome is a Church, in the Communion whereof a Man may be safe: But till that be made out; they have done nothing to perswade any Man that understands himself, that it is safe, much less necessary

ry to be of their Communion. But if particular Points must be discussed and cleared, before a Man can be satisfied in the Enquiry after the True Church; then they must allow their intended Convert to be a Judge likewise of particular Points; and if he be sufficient for that too, before he comes into their Church, I do not see of what use the Infallibility of the Church will be to him, when he is in it.

S E R M O N,

O N

H E B. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.

I Have already made a considerable Progress in my Discourse upon these Words; in which I told you, there is an Exhortation to *hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering*: and an Argument or Encouragement thereto; because *he is faithful that promised*. I am yet upon the *First* of these, the Exhortation

hortation to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*; by which I told you the Apostle doth not intend, that those who are capable of examining the Grounds and Reasons of their Religion, should not have the Liberty to do it: nor that, when upon due Enquiry they are, as they verily believe, established in the true Faith and Religion; they should obstinately refuse to hear any Reason that is fairly offered against their present Persuasion.

And then I proceeded to shew *positively*,

First, What it is that we are here exhorted to hold fast, (viz.) The Confession or Profession of our Faith; the ancient Christian Faith, of which every Christian makes Profession in his Baptism. For it is of that the Apostle here speaks, as appears plainly by the Context.

Secondly, How we are to hold fast the Profession of our Faith. And of this I gave Account in these following Particulars.

1. We should *hold fast the Profession of our Faith*, against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support that Confidence.

2. And

2. And much more against the Confidence of Men, contrary to plain Scripture and Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind ; of which I gave you particular Instances.

3. Against all the Temptations and Terrors of the World.

4. Against all vain Promises of being put into a safer Condition , and groundless Hopes of getting to Heaven upon easier Terms, in some other Church and Religion. I am now upon the

5. And *Last Particular* I mentioned, namely, That we are to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, against all the cunning Arts and Insinuations of busie and disputing Men, whose Design it is to unhinge Men from their Religion , and to make Profelytes to their Party and Faction. I have already mentioned some of the Arts which they use, (I mean particularly them of the Church of *Rome*) in making Profelytes to their Religion ; and I have shewn the Absurdity and Unreasonableness of them. As,

First, In allowing Men to be very competent and sufficient Judges for themselves, in the Choice of their Reli-

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gion ;

gion ; (i. e. which is the True Church and Religion in which alone Salvation is to be had) and yet telling them at the same time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular Doctrines and Points of Faith. As for these, they must rely upon the Judgment of an Infallible Church ; and if they do not, they will certainly run into damnable Errors and Mistakes.

And they must of necessity allow them the first, a sufficient Ability to judge for themselves in the Choice of their Religion : Otherwise in vain do they offer them Arguments to persuade them to Theirs ; if they cannot judge of the Force of them. But now, after this, to deny them all Ability to judge of particular Doctrines and Points of Faith, is a very absurd and inconsistent Pretence.

Secondly, Another Art they use, in order to their making a right Choice of their Religion, is earnestly to persuade them to hear and read only the Arguments and Books on Their side : Which is just as if one should go about to persuade a Judge, in order to the better understanding and clearer Decision of

of a Cause, to hear only the Council on one side.

Thirdly, They tell them, that the only thing they are to enquire into, is, which is the True Church, the one Catholick Church mentioned in the Creed, out of which there is no Salvation; and when they have found that, they are to rely upon the Authority of that Church, which is Infallible, for all other things. And this Method they wisely take, to avoid particular Disputes about the Innovations and Errors which we charge them withal. But I have shewn at large, that this cannot be the First Enquiry: Because it is not the true Church, that makes the true Christian Faith and Doctrine; but the Profession of the true Christian Faith and Doctrine, which makes the true Church.

Besides, their way of proving Their Church to be the only true Church, being by the Marks and Properties of the true Church, of which the Chief is, The Conformity of their Doctrines and Practices with the Primitive and Apostolical Church; this unavoidably draws on an Examination of their particular Doctrines and Practices, whether they

be conformable to those of the Primitive and Apostolical Church, before their great Enquiry, *Which is the True Church*, can be brought to any Issue; which it is plain it can never be, without entring into the Ocean of particular Disputes, which they desire above all things to avoid. So that they are never the nearer by this Method; they can neither shorten their Work by it, nor keep off the Examination of their particular Errors and Corruptions; which are a very sore place, and they cannot endure we should touch it.

I shall now proceed to discover some other Arts and Methods which they use in seducing People to Their Church and Religion, and shall be as brief in them as I can.

Fourthly, They pretend, that the *Roman* Church is the Catholick Church, (*i.e.*) the Visible Society of all Christians, united to the Bishop of *Rome*, as the Supream Pastor and Visible Head of Christ's Church upon Earth: from whence it clearly follows, That it is necessary to all Christians to joyn themselves to the Communion of the *Roman* Church; otherwise they cannot be Members

bers of the Catholick Church of Christ, out of which there is no Salvation.

We grant the Consequence, That if the *Roman* Church be the Catholick Church, it is necessary to be of that Communion; because out of the Catholick Church there is ordinarily no Salvation to be had. But how do they prove, that the *Roman* Church is the Catholick Church? They would fain have us so civil, as to take this for granted: because if we do not; they do not well know how to go about to prove it. And indeed, some things are obstinate, and will not be proved without so much Trouble and Difficulty, that it is better to let them alone; and by the confident Assertion of them, by Importunity, and by any other fair means, to get them believed, without Proof of this stubborn sort of Propositions, which will admit of no Proof. This is one, That a Part is the Whole; or, which is all one, That the *Roman* Church is the Catholick Church. For that it is but a Part of the Christian Church, and not the best Part neither, but perhaps the very worst and most corrupt of all the rest, is no difficult matter to prove, and hath been often done. But now to prove the Church

of *Rome* to be the Catholick Church ; that is, the whole Society of all True Christians in the World ; these following Particulars ought to be clearly shewn and made out.

1. A plain Constitution of our Saviour, whereby St. *Peter* and his Successors at *Rome* are made the Supream Head and Pastors of the whole Christian Church. For St. *Peter* first. Can they shew any such Constitution in the Gospel, or can they produce the least Proof and Evidence out of the History of the Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles, that St. *Peter* was acknowledg'd for such by the rest of the Apostles? Nay, is there not clear evidence there to the contrary, that in the first Council of the Christian Church at *Jerusalem*, St. *James* the Bishop of *Jerusalem* was, if not Superior, at least equal to him? Does St. *Paul* acknowledg any Superiority of St. *Peter* over him? Nay, does he not upon several occasions declare himself equal to the chiefest Apostles, even to St. *Peter* himself? And is this consistent with a plain Constitution of our Lord's, making St. *Peter* Supream Head and Pastor of the Christian Church?

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But suppose this to have been so; where doth it appear, by any Constitution of our Saviour, that this Authority was derived to his Successors? And if it were; why to his Successors at *Rome*, rather than at *Antioch*, where he was first, and unquestionably Bishop? They must acknowledg, that when he was Bishop of *Antioch*, he was the Supreme Head and Pastor of the whole Christian Church; and then the Style must have been, the *Antiochian* Catholick Church, as it is now the *Roman* Catholick. But do they find any footsteps of such a Style in Ecclesiastical History?

2. To make good this Proposition, That the *Roman* Church is the Catholick Church; they are in consequence obliged to affirm and believe, That the Churches of *Asia*, which were Excommunicated by the Bishops of *Rome*, for not keeping *Easter* as They did; and the Churches of *Asia* and *Africa*, who were Excommunicated by the same Bishop, upon the Point of Rebaptizing Hereticks; that all these, by being turn'd out of the Communion of the *Roman* Church, were also Cut off from the Ca-

tholick Church, and from a possibility of Salvation. This the Church of *Rome* themselves will not affirm; and yet, if to be cast out of the Communion of the *Roman* and the Catholick Church be all one, they must affirm it.

3. In consequence of this Proposition, That the Church of *Rome* is the Catholick Church, they ought to hold, that all Baptism out of the Communion of Their Church is void and of none effect. For if it be good; then it makes the Persons baptized, Members of the Catholick Church; and then those that are out of the Communion of the *Roman* Church, may be true Members of the Catholick Church; and then the *Roman* and the Catholick Church are not all one. But the Church of *Rome* holds the Baptism of Hereticks, and of those that are out of the Communion of Their Church, to be good; which is a Demonstration, that the *Roman* Church neither is the Catholick Church; nor if she believe consistently, can she think her self to be so.

4. In consequence of this Proposition, all the Christians in the World, which do not yield Subjection to the Bishop of *Rome*, and acknowledg his Supremacy,
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are no true parts of the Catholick Church, nor in a possibility of Salvation. And this does not only exclude those of the Reform'd Religion from being Members of the Catholick Church; but the *Greeks*, and the *Eastern Churches*; (*i. e.*) *Four* of the *Five* Patriarchal Churches of the Christian World; which taken together, are really greater than those in Communion with the Church of *Rome*. And this the Church of *Rome* does affirm, concerning all those Churches and Christians, which refuse Subjection to the Bishop of *Rome*, that they are out of the Communion of the Catholick Church, and a capacity of Salvation. But surely it is not possible, that the True Catholick Church of Christ can have so little Charity as this comes to; and to a wise Man there needs no other Demonstration than this, That the Church of *Rome* is so far from being the Whole Christian Church, that it's a very Arrogant and Uncharitable Part of it.

Fifthly and Lastly ; In consequence of the Truth of this Proposition, and of the Importance of it to the Salvation of Souls, and to the Peace and Unity of the Christian Church, they ought to produce express Mention of the *Roman Catholick Church*

Church, in the Ancient Creeds of the Christian Church. For if this Proposition, That the *Roman Church* is the Catholick, be true; it was always so, and always of the greatest Importance to the Salvation of Men, and the Peace and Unity of the Christian Church: and if it were so, and always believed to be so, by the Christian Church, as they pretend; What reason can be imagin'd, why the Ancient Christian Church should never say so, nor put an Article of such Consequence and Importance in express Words in their Creeds; nor why they should not have used the Style of *Roman Catholick*, as familiarly then, as they do now in the *Roman Church*? A plain Evidence that this is a new Style which they use, when they give themselves the Title of the *Roman Catholick Church*; and that the Ancient Christian Church knew better, than to call one Part of the Catholick Church the Whole. I am sure, that *Aeneas Sylvius* (who was afterwards Pope *Pius the Second*) says, that before the Council of *Nice*, little respect was had to the *Roman Church*. But how does this consist with their present Pretence, that the *Roman Church* is, and always hath been the
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the Catholick Church; and that the Bishop of *Rome* is by Christ's appointment, the Supream Pastor, and Visible Head of the whole Christian Church? Is it possible that this should be believed in the Christian Church before the Council of *Nice*; and yet little respect to be had at that time to the *Roman* Church? This indeed was said by *Aeneas Sylvius*, before he sat in the Infallible Chair; but is never the less true for that.

5^{ly}. The next step of their Method is, That the *Roman* Church is Infallible; and by this means They have a certain remedy against Heresie, and a Judge of Controversies, from which there is no Appeal, which We want in Our Church. And this is a Glorious Privilege indeed, if they could prove that they had it, and that it would be so certain a remedy against Heresie, and give a final Decision to all Controversies. But there is not one tittle of all this, of which they are able to give any tenable Proof; For,

1. All the pretence for their Infallibility relies upon the truth of the former Proposition, That the Church of
Rome

Rome is the Catholick Church, and That they say is Infallible : And I have already shewn, that That Proposition is not only destitute of any good Proof, but is as evidently false, as that a Part of a thing is the Whole.

2. But supposing it were true, That the *Roman* Church were the Catholick Church ; yet it is neither evident in it self, nor can be proved by them, that the Catholick Church of every Age is Infallible, in deciding all Controversies of Religion. It is granted by all Christians, that our Saviour and his Apostles were Infallible, in the delivery of the Christian Doctrine ; and they proved their Infallibility by Miracles ; and this was necessary at first for the Security of our Faith : but this Doctrine being once Delivered and Transmitted down to us in the Holy Scriptures, Written by the Evangelists and Apostles, who were Infallibly assisted by the Holy Ghost ; we have now a certain and Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice, which, with the assistance and instruction of those Guides and Pastors which Christ hath appointed in his Church, is sufficiently plain in all things necessary.

necessary. And as there is no evidence of the Continuance of Infallibility in the Guides and Pastors of the Church, in the Ages which followed the Apostles; because Miracles are long since ceased: so there is no need of the Continuance of it, for the Preservation of the True Faith and Religion; because God hath sufficiently provided for that, by that Infallible Rule of Faith and Manners which he hath left to his Church in the Holy Scriptures, *which are every way sufficient and able to make both Pastors and People wise unto Salvation.*

3. As for a certain Remedy against Heresie, it is certain God never intended there should be any; no more than he hath provided a certain Remedy against Sin and Vice; which surely is every whit as contrary to the Christian Religion, and therefore as fit to be provided against, as Heresie: But it is certain in Experience, that God hath provided no certain and effectual Remedy against Sin and Vice; for which I can give no other reason, but that God does that which He thinks best and fittest, and not what We are apt to think to be so.

Besides that Infallibility is not a certain
Remedy

Remedy against Heresie. The Apostles were certainly Infallible ; and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguish Heresie ; which never more abounded than in the Apostles Times. And Saint Paul expressly tells us, 1 Cor. 1. 19. *That there must be Heresies ; that they which are approved may be made manifest.* And St. Peter, the 2 Epist. 2. 1. *That there should be false Teachers among Christians, who should privily bring in damnable Heresies ; and that many should follow their pernicious ways.* But now if there must be Heresies ; either the Church must not be Infallible , or Infallibility in the Church is no certain Remedy against them.

I proceed to the next Step they make
viz.

6ly. That Christ hath always a Visible Church upon Earth ; and that They can shew a Church, which from the time of Christ and his Apostles, hath always made a Visible Profession of the same Doctrines and Practices which are now believed and practised in the Church of Rome ; but that We can shew no Visible Church, that from the time of Christ and his Apostles, hath always
opposed

opposed the Church of *Rome* in, those Doctrines and Practices which we now revile and find fault with in their Church.

That Christ hath always had, and ever shall have to the end of the World, a Visible Church, Professing and Practising his True Faith and Religion, is agreed on both sides: But We say, that he hath no where promised, that This shall be free from all Errors and Corruptions in Faith and Practice. This the Churches Planted by the Apostles themselves were not, even in Their times, and during Their abode amongst them; and yet they were true parts of the Christian Catholick Church. In the following Ages, Errors and Corruptions and Superstitions did by degrees creep in and grow up, in several parts of the Church; as *St. Austin*, and others of the Fathers complain of their Times. Since that several Famous Parts of the Christian Church, both in *Asia* and *Africa*, have not only been greatly corrupted, but have Apostatiz'd from the Faith; so that in many Places there are hardly any Footsteps of Christianity among them. But yet still Christ hath had in all these Ages a Visible Church

Church upon Earth ; tho' perhaps no Part of it at all times free from some Errors and Corruptions ; and in several Parts of it, great Corruptions both in Faith and Practice ; and in none I think more and longer, than in the Church of Rome, for all she boasts her self like Old Babylon, *Isa. 47. 7, 8. That she is a Lady for ever ; and says in her heart, I am, and none else besides me ;* And like the Church of Laodicea, *Revel. 3. 17. which said, I am rich, and increased with Goods, and have need of nothing ;* When the Spirit of God saith, *that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ; and knew it not.*

Thus the Church of Rome boasts ; that She hath in all Ages been the True Visible Church of Christ (and none besides her) free from all Errors in Doctrine, and Corruptions in Practice ; and that from the Age of Christ and his Apostles, she hath always professed the same Doctrines and Practices which she does at this day. Can any thing be more shameless than this ? Did they always believe *Transubstantiation* ? Let their Pope *Gelasius* speak for them ; who expressly denies, that in the Sacrament there

there is any Substantial change of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Was this always an Article of their Faith, and necessary to be believed by all Christians? Let *Scotus*, and several other of their Schoolmen and Learned Writers speak for them. Was *Purgatory* always believed in the *Roman Church*, as it is now defined in the Council of *Trent*? Let several of their Learned Men speak. In what Father, in what Council before that of *Trent*, do they find Christ to have Instituted just *Seven Sacraments*, neither more nor less? And for Practices in their Religion, they themselves will not say, that in the Ancient Christian Church the Scriptures were with-held from the People, and lockt up in an Unknown Tongue; and that the Publick Service of God, the Prayers and Lessons were Read, and the Sacraments Celebrated, in an Unknown Tongue; and that the Sacrament of the Lords Supper was given to the People only in one Kind. Where do they find in Holy Scripture, or in the Doctrine and Practice of the Ancient Christian Church, any Command or

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Example for the Worship of Images ; for the Invocation of Saints and Angels and the Blessed Virgin ; which do now make a great part of their Religion ? Nay, is not the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and of the Ancient Fathers plainly against all these Practices ? With what face then can it be said, That the Church of *Rome* hath made a constant Visible Profession of the same Faith and Practice in all Ages, from the time of Christ and his Apostles ? Or would the primitive Church of *Rome*, if it should now visit the Earth again, own the present Church of *Rome* to be the same in all Matters of Faith and practice, that it was when they left it ?

And whereas they demand of Us, to shew a Visible Church from the time of Christ and his Apostles, that hath always opposed the Church of *Rome*, in those points of Doctrine and Practice which we Object to them ; what can be more impertinent than this Demand ? When they know that in all these Points we charge them with Innovations in Matters of Faith and Practice, and say that those things came in by degrees,

degrees, several Ages after the Apostles time, some sooner, some later; as we are able to make good, and have done it. And would they have us shew them a Visible Church, that opposed these Errors and Corruptions in their Church, before ever they appeared? This we do not pretend to shew. And supposing they had not been at all opposed, when they appeared, nor a long time after, not till the Reformation; yet if they be Errors and Corruptions of the Christian Doctrine, and contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and to the Faith and Practice of the Primitive Church; there is no Prescription against Truth. 'Tis never too late, for any Church to reject those Errors and Corruptions, and to reform it self from them.

The bottom of all this Matter is, they would have us to shew them a Society of Christians, that in all Ages hath preserved it self free from all such Errors and Corruptions as we charge them withall; or else we deny the Perpetual Visibility of the Catholick Church. No such matter. We say the Church of Christ hath always

been Visible in every Age since Christ's time ; and that the several Societies of Christians, professing the Christian Doctrine and Laws of Christ, have made up the Catholick Church ; some parts whereof have in several Ages fallen into great Errors and Corruptions ; and no part of the Catholick, into more and greater, than the Church of *Rome*. So that it requires the utmost of our Charity to think that they are a true, tho' a very unsound and corrupt Part of the Catholick Church of Christ.

We acknowledge likewise, that We were once involved in the like Degeneracy ; but by the mercy of God, and pious care and prudence of those that were in Authority, are happily rescued out of it : and tho' we were not out of the Catholick Church before ; yet since our Reformation from the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, we are in it upon better Terms, and are a much sounder Part of it ; and I hope, by the Mercy and Goodness of God, we shall for ever continue so.

So that to the Perpetual Visibilty of Christ's Church, it is not necessary, that the whole Christian Church, or indeed that any Part of it should be free from all Errors and Corruptions. Even the Churches planted by the Apostles in the Primitive Times were not so. St. Paul reproveth several Doctrines and Practices in the Church of *Corinth*, and of *Colosse*, and of *Galatia*; and the Spirit of God, several Things in the Seven Churches of *Asia*: and yet all these were true Parts and Members of the Catholick Church of Christ, notwithstanding these Faults and Errors; because they all agreed in the Main and Essential Doctrines of Christianity. And when more and greater Corruptions grew upon the Church, or any part of it; the greater reason and need there was of a Reformation. And as every particular Person hath a right to reform any thing that he finds amiss in himself, so far as concerns himself; so much more every National Church hath a Power within it self, to reform it self from all Errors and Corruptions, and by the Sanction of the Catholick Authority to confirm that Reformation; which

is our Case here in England. And whatever part of the Church, how great and eminent soever, excludes from her Communion such a National Church, for reforming herself from plain Errors and Corruptions, clearly condemned by the Word of God, and by the Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive Christian Church, is undoubtedly Guilty of *Schism*. And this is the Truth of the Case between us and the Church of Rome. And no blind talk about a Perpetual Visible Church can render Us guilty of *Schism*, for making a Real Reformation; or acquit Them of it, for casting us out of their Communion for that Cause.

7. And *Lastly*, (to mention no more) they pretend, that we delude the People, by laying too much stress upon Scripture, and making it the only Rule of Faith and Manners: whereas Scripture and Tradition together make up the entire Rule of Faith; and not Scripture Interpreted by every Mans private Fancy, but by Tradition carefully preserved in the

the Church. So that it ought to be no wonder, if several of their Doctrines and Practices cannot be so clearly made out by Scripture, or perhaps seem contrary to it, as it may be expounded by a private Spirit, but not as Interpreted by the Tradition of the Church, which can only give the true Sense of Scripture. And therefore they are to understand, that several of those Doctrines and Practices, which we Object against, are most clearly proved by the Tradition of their Church, which is of equal Authority with Scripture.

In this Objection of theirs, which they design for the Cover of all their Errors and Corruptions, there are several things distinctly to be considered, which I shall do as briefly as I can.

First, Whereas it is suggested, That We delude the People, by laying too much stress upon the Scriptures, (which certainly we cannot well do, if it be the Word of God) it ought to be considered, whether They do not delude and abuse them

infinitely more, in keeping the Scriptures from them, and not suffering them to see That, which they cannot deny to be at least a considerable Part of the Rule of Christian Doctrine and Practice. Doth it not by this dealing of theirs appear very suspicious, that they are extremely afraid that the People should examine their Doctrine and Practice by this Rule? For what other Reason can they have to conceal it from them?

Secondly, Whereas they affirm, that Scripture alone is not the Rule of Christian Faith and Practice; but that Scripture, and Oral Tradition preserved in the Church, and delivered down from hand to hand, makes up the entire Rule: I would fain know whence they learn'd this new Doctrine of the Rule of Faith? I know that the Council of *Trent* declares it for the Rule they intend to proceed upon and make use of, for the Confirmation and Proof of their following Determinations and Decrees. But did any of the ancient Councils of the Christian Church lay down this Rule,
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and proceed upon it? Did not *Constantine* the Emperour, at the opening of the *First General Council*, lay the *Bible* before them, as the only Rule, according to which they were to proceed; and this with the Approbation of all those Holy Fathers that were assembled in that Council? And did not following Councils proceed upon the same Rule? Do any of the ancient Fathers ever mention any Rule of Christian Faith and Practice, besides the Holy Scriptures, and the ancient Creed; which, because it is an Abridgment of the necessary Articles of Christian Faith contained in the Holy Scriptures, is by them frequently called *the Rule of Faith*? Do not the same Fathers frequently and expressly say, That the Scriptures are a perfect Rule, and that all things are plainly contained in them, which concern Faith and Life; and that whatever cannot be proved by Testimony of Scripture, is to be rejected? All this I am sure I can make good, by innumerable express Testimonies of the ancient Fathers, which are well known to those that are versed in them. By
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what Authority then hath the Council of *Trent* set up this new Rule, unknown to the Christian Church for 1500 Years? and who gave them this Authority? The plain truth is, the necessity of it, for the Defence of the Errors and Corruptions which they had embraced, and were resolved not to part with, forced them to lengthen out the Rule; the old Rule of the Holy Scriptures being too short for their purpose.

Thirdly, Whereas they pretend, that Holy Scripture, as expounded by a private Spirit, may not seem so favourable to some of their Doctrines and Practices; yet, as interpreted by Tradition, which can only give the true Sense of Scripture, it agrees very well with them: I suppose they mean, that whereas a private Spirit would be apt to understand some Texts of Scripture, as if People were to search and read the Scripture; Tradition interprets those Texts in a quite other Sense, that People are not to be permitted to read the Holy Scriptures. A private Spirit would be apt to understand

derstand St. Paul's Discourse, in the 14th of the 1st to the *Corinthians*, to be against Celebrating Prayer and the Service of God in an unknown Tongue, as being contrary to Edification, and indeed to common Sense: For he says, *If ore should come, and find them speaking and praying in an unknown Tongue; will they not say, Ye are mad?* But now Tradition, which only knows how to give the true Sense, can reconcile this Discourse of St. Paul very easily with the Practice of the Church of *Rome* in this matter. And so likewise the Epistle of St. Paul to the *Colossians*, with the Worship of Angels; and the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, with offering the Propitiatory Sacrifice of Christ in the Mass a Thousand times every Day. And to give but one Instance more; Whereas a Man by his private Spirit would be very apt to understand the Second Commandment to forbid all Worship of Images; Tradition discovers the meaning of this Commandment to be, that due Veneration is to be given to them. So that at this rate of interpreting Scripture by Tradition, it is impossible to fix any Ob-
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jection from Scripture, upon any Doctrine or Practice which they have a mind to maintain.

Fourthly, Whereas they pretend the Tradition of their Church, delivered from the Mouth of Christ, or dictated by the Holy Spirit, and brought down to them, and preserved by continual Succession in the Church, to be of equal Authority with the Word of God; for so the Council of Trent says, *That the Holy Synod doth receive and venerate these Traditions, with equal pious Affection and Reverence, as they do the written Word of God*: This we must declare against, as unreasonable in it self, to make Tradition, conveyed by Word of Mouth from one to another, through so many Ages, and liable to so many Mistakes and Miscarriages, to be, at the distance of 1500 Years, of equal Certainty and Authority with the Holy Scriptures, carefully preserved and transmitted down to us; because this (as I said before) is to make common Rumor and Report of equal Authority and Certainty with a written Record. And
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not only so; but hereby they make the Scriptures an imperfect Rule; contrary to the declared Judgment of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Christian Church; and so, in truth, they set up a *new Rule of Faith*, whereby they change the Christian Religion. For a *new Rule of Faith and Religion* makes a *new Faith and Religion*. This we charge the Church of *Rome* with, and do challenge them to shew this *new Rule of Faith*, before the Council of *Trent*; and consequently, where their Religion was before that Council; to shew a Religion, consisting of all those *Articles*, which are defined by the Council of *Trent* as necessary to Salvation, and established upon this *new Rule*, professed by any Christian Church in the World before that time. And as they have pitch'd upon a *new Rule of Faith*; so it is easie to see to what End. For take Pope *Pius IV.* his *Creed*, and we may see where the *Old* and *New* Religion parts; even at the end of the *Twelve Articles* of the *Aplostles Creed*, which was the ancient Christian Faith; to which are
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added in Pope *Pius* his *Creed* Twelve *Articles* more, defined in the Council of *Trent*, and supported only by Tradition. So that as the Scripture answers for the *Twelve old Articles*, which are plainly contained there; so Tradition is to answer for the *Twelve new ones*. And therefore the matter was calculated very exactly, when they make Tradition just of equal Authority with the Scriptures; because as many *Articles* of Their Faith were to be made good by it, and rely upon it, as those which are proved by the Authority of Scripture. But that Tradition is of equal Authority with the Scriptures, we have nothing in the whole World for it, but the bare Assertion of the Council of *Trent*.

I should now have added some other Considerations, tending to confirm and establish us in our Religion, against the Pretences and Insinuations of Seducing Spirits: But I shall proceed no farther at present.

The Tenth Sermon, as number'd, follows.

THere is a mistake in Numbering
of these Sermons. The Tenth
should be called the Ninth, and so on
to the end. For there are but Fifteen
Sermons in this Volume, and should
be no more.

I have been much interested in the
of this country. The people
that we find in the North, and in the
to the south, but there are but few
of them in this volume, and I think
be to give.

A

S E R M O N.

H E B. X. 23.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our
Faith without wavering, for he is
faithful that hath promised.*

TH E S E words contain an Exhortation to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, and an Argument or Encouragement thereto, because *he is faithful that hath promised.* By the Exhortation to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, is not meant, that those who are capable of examining the Grounds and Reasons of their Religion should blindly hold it fast against the best Reasons that can be offered ; because upon these terms, every Man must con-

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tinue in the Religion in which he happens to be fixt by Education, or an ill choice, be his Religion true or false; without Examining and looking into it, whether it be right or wrong; for till a Man examines, every Man thinks his Religion right. That which the Apostle here exhorts Christians to hold fast, is the Ancient Faith, of which all Christians make a solemn profession in their Baptism; as plainly appears from the context. And this Profession of our Faith, we are to hold in the following instances, which I shall but briefly mention, without enlarging upon them.

1. We are to hold fast the Profession of our Faith against the Confidence of Men, without Scripture or Reason to support that Confidence.

2. And much more, against the Confidence of Men contrary to plain Scripture and Reason, and to the common Sense of Mankind.

3. Against all the Temptations and Terrors of the World, against the Temptations of Fashion and Example, and of Worldly Interest and Advantage, and against all Terrors and Sufferings of Persecution.

4. Against

4. Against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to Heaven upon easier terms than the Gospel hath proposed, in some other Church and Religion.

Lastly, We are to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, against all the cunning Arts and Insinuations of busie and disputing Men, whose design it is to unhinge Men from their Religion, and to make Profelytes to their Party and Faction.

But without entring into these particulars, I shall in order to Establishment in the Reformed Religion which we profess, in opposition to the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, apply my self at this time, to make a short comparison betwixt the Religion which we profess, and that of the Church of *Rome*: That we may discern on which side the advantage of Truth lies; and in making this comparison, I shall insist upon Three things, which will bring the matter to an issue, and are, I think, sufficient to determine every sober and considerate Man, which of these he ought in Reason, and with regard to

the safety of his Soul, to embrace: And they are these.

I. That we govern our Belief and Practice in matters of Religion, by the true ancient Rule of Christianity, the Word of God contained in the Holy Scriptures: But the Church of *Rome*, for the maintenance of their Errors and Corruptions, have been forced to devise a new Rule, never owned by the Primitive Church, nor by the Ancient Fathers and Councils of it.

II. That the Doctrines and Practices in difference betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*, are either contrary to this Rule, or destitute of the Warrant and Authority of it, and are plain Additions to the ancient Christianity, and Corruptions of it.

III. That our Religion hath many clear Advantages of that of the Church of *Rome*, not only very considerable in themselves, but very obvious and discernable to an ordinary capacity, upon the first proposal of them. I shall be as brief in these as I can.

I. That

I. That we govern our belief and Practice in matters of Religion, by the true ancient Rule of Christianity, the Word of God contain'd in the Holy Scriptures: But the Church of *Rome*, for the maintaining of their Errors and Corruptions, have been forced to devise a new Rule, never owned by the Primitive Church, nor by the Ancient Councils and Fathers of it; That is, they have joined with the Word of God contained in the Holy Scriptures, the unwritten Traditions of their Church, concerning several points of their Faith and Practice; which they acknowledge cannot be proved from Scripture, and these they call the unwritten Word of God; and the Council of *Trent* hath decreed them to be of equal Authority with the Holy Scriptures; and that they do receive and venerate them with the same pious Affection and Reverence; and all this, contrary to the express declaration and unanimous consent of all the Ancient Councils and Fathers of the Christian Church, (as I have already shewn); and this never declar'd to be a point of Faith, till it was decreed,

(not much above a Hundred Years ago) in the Council of *Trent*; and this surely, if any thing, is a Matter of great consequence, to presume to alter the Ancient Rule of Christian Doctrine and Practice, and to enlarge it, and add to it, at their pleasure. But the Church of *Rome* having made so great a change in the Doctrine and Practice of Christianity, it became consequently necessary to make a change of the Rule: And therefore with great Reason did the Council of *Trent* take this into consideration in the first place, and put it in the front of their Decrees, because it was to be the foundation and main proof of the following Definitions of Faith, and Decrees of Practice, for which, without this new Rule, there had been no colour.

II. The Doctrines and Practices in difference betwixt us, and the Church of *Rome*, are either contrary to the true Rule, or destitute of the Warrant and Authority of it; and plain Additions to the Ancient Christianity, and Corruptions of it; the Truth of this will best appear, by instancing in some
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of the principal Doctrines and Practices in difference betwixt us.

As for their two great Fundamental Doctrines, of the Supremacy of the Bishop of *Rome* over all the Christians in the world, and the Infallibility of their Church, there is not one word in Scripture concerning these Priviledges; nay it is little less than a demonstration that they have no such Priviledges, that *St. Paul* in a long Epistle to the Church of *Rome* takes no notice of them; That the Church of *Rome* either then was, or was to be soon after, the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, which is now grown to be an Article of Faith in the Church of *Rome*; and yet it is hardly to be imagined, that he could have omitted to take notice of such remarkable Priviledges of their Bishops and Church, above any in the world, had he known they had belonged to them. So that in all probability he was ignorant of those mighty Prerogatives of the Church of *Rome*, otherwise it cannot be, but that he would have written with more deference and submission to this Seat of Infallibility, and Center of Unity; he would certainly

have paid a greater Respect to this Mother and Mistress of all Churches, where the Head of the Church, and Vicar of Christ either was already seated, or by the appointment of Christ was designed for ever to fix his Throne and establish his Residence ; but there is not one word, or the least intimation of any such thing throughout this whole Epistle, nor in any other part of the New Testament.

Besides, that both these pretended Privileges are omitted, by plain Fact and Evidence of things themselves, their *Supremacy*, in that the far greatest part of the Christian Church, neither is at this day, nor can be shewn by the Records of any Age, ever to have been subject to the Bishop of *Rome*, or to have acknowledged his Authority and Jurisdiction over them, and the *Infallibility* of the Pope, whether with or without a General Council, (about which they still differ) though Infallibility was devised on purpose, to determine all differences: I say, this Infallibility, where-ever it is pretended to be, is plainly confuted by the contradictory Definitions of several

veral Popes and Councils; for if they have contradicted one another, (as is plain, beyond all contradiction, in several instances) then there must of necessity be an Error on one side; and there can be no so certain demonstration, that any one is infallible, as evident Error and Mistake is of the contrary.

Next, their concealing both the Rule of Religion and the Practice of it, in the Worship and Service of God, from the People, in an unknown Tongue; and their administering the Communion to the People in one kind only, contrary to clear Scripture and the plain Institution of our Blessed Saviour; and then their Worship of Images, and Invocation of Angels and Saints, and the Blessed Virgin, in the same Solemn manner, and for the same Blessings and Benefits which we beg of God himself, contrary to the express Word of God, which commands us to Worship the Lord our God; and to serve him only; and which declares, that as there is but one God, so there is but one Mediator between God and Man, Christ Jesus; but one Mediator not only of Redemption, but of Intercession too; for the Apostle there speaks of a Mediator of Intercession,
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by whom only we are to offer up our Prayers, which are to be put up to God only, and which expressely forbids Men to worship any Image or likeness: And the Learned Men of their own Church acknowledg, that there is neither Precept nor Example for these Practices in Scripture, and that they were not used in the Christian Church for several Ages; and this acknowledgment we think very considerable, since so great a part of their Religion, especially as it is practised among the People, is contained in these points; for the Service of God in an Unknown Tongue, and withholding the Scriptures from the People, they do not pretend so much as One Testimony of any Father for the first 600 Years, and nothing certainly can be more unreasonable in it self, than to deny People the best means of knowing the Will of God, and not to permit them to understand what is done in the publick Worship of God, and what Prayers are put up to him in the Church.

The two great Doctrines of Transubstantiation and Purgatory are acknowledged by many of their own Learned Writers, to have no certain Foundation
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in Scripture ; and that there are seven Sacraments of the Christian Religion, tho' it be now made an Article of Faith by the Council of *Trent*, is a thing which cannot be shewn in any Council or Father for above a Thousand Years after Christ. And we find no mention of this Number of the Sacraments, till the Age of *Peter Lombard* the Father of the Schoolmen.

That the Church of *Rome* is the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, tho' that also be one of the new Articles of Pope *Pius* the IV. his Creed, which their Priests are by a Solemn Oath obliged to believe and teach, yet is it most evidently false : That she is not the Mother of all Churches is plain, because *Jerusalem* was certainly so, for there certainly was the first Christian Church, and from thence all the Christian Churches in the World derive themselves ; that she is not, (tho' she fain would be) the Mistress of all Churches, is as evident, because the greatest part of the Christian Church does at this day, and always did, deny that she hath any Authority or Supremacy over them. Now these are the principal matters in difference betwixt us, and if these Points, and a few more, be pared off from Popery,

pery, that which remains of their Religion, is the same with ours, that is, the true Ancient Christianity.

III. I shall shew that our Religion hath many clear advantages of theirs, not only very considerable in themselves, but very obvious and discernable to an ordinary capacity, upon the very first proposal of them; as,

I. That our Religion agrees perfectly with the Scriptures, and all points both of our Belief and Practice, esteemed by us as necessary to Salvation, are there contained, even our Enemies themselves being Judges. *We Worship the Lord our God, and him only do we serve.* We do not fall down before Images and Worship them, we address all our Prayers to God alone, by the only Mediation and Intercession of his Son Jesus Christ; as he himself hath given us Commandment, and as St. Paul doth plainly direct, giving us this plain and Substantial Reason for it, Because as there is but one God, so there is but one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus.

The publick Worship and Service of God is perform'd by us in a Language which

which we understand, according to St. Paul's express Order and Direction, and the universal Practice of the ancient Church, and the Nature and Reason of the thing it self: We administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in both kinds, according to our Saviour's Example and plain Institution; and the continual Practice of all the Christian Churches in the World, for above a Thousand Years.

2. We believe nothing as necessary to Salvation, but what hath been owned in all Ages to be the Christian Doctrine, and is acknowledged so to be by the Church of *Rome* it self; and we receive the whole Faith of the Primitive Christian Church, (*viz.*) What ever is contained in the Apostles Creed, and in the Explications of that in the Creeds of the Four first General Councils. By which it plainly appears, that all points of Faith in difference betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*, are meer Innovations and plain Additions to the ancient Christian Faith. But all that we believe, is acknowledged by them to be undoubtedly the ancient Christian Faith.

3. There is nothing wanting in our Church and Religion, whether in Mat-

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ter of Faith or Practice, which either the Scripture makes necessary to Salvation, or was so esteem'd by the Christian Church for the first Five Hundred Years; and we trust, that what was sufficient for the Salvation of Christians in the best Ages of Christianity for Five Hundred Years together, may be so still; and we are very well content to venture our Salvation upon the same terms that they did.

4. Our Religion is not only free from all Idolatrous Worship, but even from all Suspicion and probable Charge of any such thing; but this the Church of *Rome* is not, as is acknowledged by her most Learned Champions, and as no Man of Ingenuity can deny; And the Reason which the Learned Men give, why the Worship of Images, and the Invocation of Angels and Saints departed were not practised in the Primitive Church, for the first Three Hundred Years, is a plain acknowledgment that these Practices are very liable to the Suspicion of Idolatry; for they say, that the Christians did then forbear those Practices, because they seem'd to come too near to the Pagan Idolatry, and lest the
Heathen

Heathen should have taken occasion to have justified themselves, if these things had been practised among Christians; and they cannot now be Ignorant, what Scandal they give by these Practices both to the *Jews* and *Turks*, and how much they alienate them from Christianity by this Scandal; nor can they chuse but be sensible, upon how great disadvantage they are in defending these Practices from the Charge of Idolatry; and that by all their blind Distinctions, with which they raise such a Cloud and Dust, they can hardly make any plausible and tollerable Defence of themselves from this Charge: Insomuch, that to secure their own People from discerning their Guilt in this Matter, they have been put upon that shameful shift of leaving out the Second Commandment in their common Catechisms and Manuals, lest the People, seeing so plain a Law of God against so common a Practice of their Church, should upon that Discovery have broken off from them.

5. Nor is our Religion incumbered with such an endless number of superstitious and troublesom Observances, as theirs infinitely

infinitely is, even beyond the Number of the *Jewish* Ceremonies, to the great Burden and Scandal of the Christian Religion, and the diverting of Mens Minds from the spiritual part of Religion, and the more weighty and necessary Duties of the Christian Life; so that, in truth, a devout Pastor is so taken up with the external Rites and little Observances of his Religion, that he hath little or no time to make himself a good Man, and to cultivate and improve his Mind in true Piety and Virtue.

6. Our Religion is evidently more Charitable to all Christians that differ from us, and particularly to them, who, by their Uncharitableness to us, have done as much as is possible to discharge and damp our Charity towards them. And Charity, as it is one of the most essential Marks of a true Christian, so it is likewise the best Mark and Ornament of a true Church; and of all things that can be thought of, methinks the want of Charity in any Church should be a Motive to no Man to fall in love with it, and to be fond of its Communion.

7. Our Religion doth not clash and interfere with any of the great Moral Duties,

Duties, to which all Mankind stand obliged by the Law and Light of Nature; as Fidelity, Mercy and Truth: We do not teach Men to break Faith with Hereticks or Infidels, nor to destroy and extirpate those who differ from us, with Fire and Sword: No such thing as Equivocation or Mental Reservation, or any other Artificial way of Falshood, is either taught or maintain'd, either by the Doctrine or by the Casuists of our Church.

8. Our Religion and all the Doctrines of it are perfectly consistent with the Peace of Civil Government, and the Welfare of Humane Society: We neither exempt the Clergy from Subjection to the Civil Powers, nor absolve Subjects upon any pretence whatsoever from allegiance to their Princes; both which Points, the necessity of the one, and the lawfulness of the other, have been taught and stilly maintain'd in the Church of *Rome*, not only by private Doctors, but by Popes and General Councils.

9. The Doctrines of our Religion, are perfectly free from all Suspicion of a Worldly Interest and Design, where-
as the greatest part of the erroneous

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Doctrines with which we charge the Church of *Rome*, are plainly calculated to promote the end of Worldly Greatness and Dominion.

The Pope's *Kingdom is plainly of this World*; and the Doctrines and Maxims of it, like so many Servants, are ready upon all occasion *to fight for him*. For most of them do plainly tend, either to the Establishment and Enlargment of his Authority; or to the Magnifying of the Priests, and the giving them a perfect power over the Consciencs of the People, and the keeping them in a slavish subjection and blind obedience to them. And to this purpose do plainly tend the Doctrines of exempting the Clergy from the Secular Power and Jurisdiction; the Doctrine of Transubstantiation; for it must needs make the Priest a great Man in the Opinion of the People, to believe that he can make God, as they love to express it, without all Reason and Reverence. Of the like tendency is the Communicating of the Laity only in one kind, thereby making it the sole Priviledge of the Priest to receive the Sacrament in both. The with-holding the Scripture from the People,

People, and celebrating the Service of God in an unknown Tongue. The Doctrine of an implicate Faith, and absolute Resignation of their Judgments to their Teachers. These do all directly tend to keep the People in ignorance, and to bring them to a blind Obedience, to the dictates of their Teachers: So likewise the Necessity of the intention of the Priests, to the saving Virtue and Efficacy of the Sacraments; by which Doctrine, the People do upon the matter depend as much upon the good will of the Priest, as upon the Mercy of God for their Salvation; but above all, their Doctrine of the Necessity of Auricular and private Confession, of all Mortal Sins committed after Baptism, with all the Circumstances of them to the Priest; and this not only for the ease and direction of their Consciences, but as a necessary condition of having their Sins pardoned and forgiven by God: By which means they make themselves Masters of all the Secrets of the People, and keep them in awe by the knowledge of their faults, *Scire volunt secreta Domus atque inde timeri.* Or else their Doctrines tend to filthy lucre, and the

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enriching of their Church. As their Doctrines of Purgatory and Indulgences, and their Prayers and Masses for the dead, and many more Doctrines and Practices of the like kind plainly do.

10. Our Religion is free from all disingenuous and dishonest Arts of maintaining and supporting it self; such are clipping of ancient Authors, nay and even the Authors and Writers of their own Church; when they speak too freely of any Point: as may be seen in their *Indices Expurgatorii* which much against their wills have been brought to light. To which I shall only add these Three gross Forgeries, which lie all at their doors, and they cannot deny them to be so.

1. The pretended Canon of the Council of *Nice* in the case of Appeals, between the Church of *Rome* and the *African* Church. Upon which they insisted a great while very confidently, till at last they were convinced by Authentick Copies of the Canons of that Council.

2. *Constantine's* Donation to the Pope, which

which they kept a great stir with, till the Forgery of it was discovered.

3. The Decretal Epistles of the Ancient Popes ; a large Volume of Forgeries, compiled by *Isidore Mercator*, to countenance the Usurpations of the Bishop of *Rome*, and of which the Church of *Rome* made great use for several Ages, and pertinaciously defended the Authority of them, till the Learned Men of their own Church have at last been forced for very shame to disclaim them, and to confess the Imposture of them: A like instance whereto, is not I hope to be shewn in any Christian Church. This is that which *St. Paul* calls *Kυβερία*, the slight of Men; such as Gamesters use at Dice ; for to alledge false and forged Authors in this case, is to play with false Dice, when the Salvation of Mens Souls lie at stake.

II. Our Religion hath this mighty advantage, that it doth not decline Tryal and Examination, which to any Man of ingenuity must needs appear a very good Sign of an honest Cause; but if any Church be shy of having her Religion Examined, and her Doctrines and Practices brought into the open light, this gives just ground of

Suspicion that she hath some distrust of them; for Truth doth not seek corners, nor shun the light. Our Saviour hath told us who they are that *love darkness rather than light*, viz. they whose deeds are Evil; for every one, saith he, that doth Evil, hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd and made manifest. There needs no more to render a Religion suspected to a wise Man, than to see those who profess it, and make such proud boasts of the Truth and Goodness of it, so fearful that it should be examin'd and lookt into, and that their People should take the liberty to hear and read what can be said against it.

12. We perswade Men to our Religion by Human and Christian ways, such as our Saviour and his Apostles used, by urging Men with the Authority of God, and with Arguments fetcht from another World. The promise of Eternal Life and Happiness, and the threatning of Eternal death and Misery, which are the proper Arguments of Religion, and which alone are fitted to work upon the Minds and Consciences of Men; the terror and

and torture of death may make Men Hypocrites, and awe them to profess with their Mouths what they do not believe in their Hearts; but this is no proper means of converting the Soul, and convincing the Minds and Consciences of Men; and these violent and cruel ways cannot be denied to have been Practised in the Church of *Rome*, and set on foot by the Authority of Councils, and greatly countenanced and encouraged by Popes themselves: Witness the many Croisades for the extirpation of Hereticks, the standing Cruelties of their Inquisition, their occasional Massacres and Persecutions, of which we have fresh Instances in every Age.

But these Methods of Conversion are a certain Sign that they either disturb the Truth and Goodness of their Cause, or else that they think Truth and the Arguments for it are of no force, when Dragoons are their *Ratio ultima*, the last Reason which their Cause relies upon; and the best and most effectual it can afford.

Again, we hold no Doctrines in defiance of the Senses of all Mankind; such as is that of Transubstantiation, which

is now declared in the Church of *Rome* to be a Necessary Article of Faith, so that a Man cannot be of that Religion, unless he will renounce his Senses, and believe against the clear Verdict of them in a plain sensible matter; but after this, I do not understand how a Man can believe any thing, because by this very thing he destroys and takes away the Foundation of all Certainty; if any Man forbid me to believe what I see, I forbid him to believe any thing upon better and surer Evidence. *St. Paul* saith, that Faith cometh by hearing; but if I cannot rely upon the certainty of Sense, then the means whereby Faith is conveyed, is uncertain; and we may say, as *St. Paul* doth in another case, *Then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith also is vain.*

Lastly, (To mention no more particulars) as to several things used and Practised in the Church of *Rome*, we are on the much safer side, if we should happen to be mistaken about them; than they are, if they should be mistaken; for it is certainly Lawful to read the Scriptures, and Lawful to permit to the People the use of the Scriptures

Scriptures in a known Tongue: Otherwise we must condemn the Apostles and the Primitive Church for allowing this Liberty. It is certainly Lawful to have the publick Prayers and Service of God celebrated in a Language which all that joyn in it can understand. It is certainly Lawful to administer the Sacrament of the Lords Supper to the People in both kinds, otherwise the Christian Church would not have done it for a Thousand Years. It is certainly Lawful, not to Worship Images, not to pray to Angels, or Saints, or the Blessed Virgin, otherwise the Primitive Church would not have forbore these Practices for Three Hundred Years, as is acknowledged by those of the Church of Rome.

Suppose a Man should pray to God only, and offer up all his Prayers to him only by Jesus Christ, without making mention of any other Mediator or Intercessor with God for us, relying herein upon what the Apostle says concerning our High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, *Heb. 7 25. That he is able to save them to the utmost, who come unto God by him, (i. e.) by his Mediation*

diation and Intercession, since he ever liveth to make Intercession for them; might not a Man reasonably *hope to obtain of God all the Blessings he stands in need of, by Addressing himself only to him, in the Name and by the Intercession of that one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus?* Nay, why may not a Man reasonably think, that this is both a shorter and more effectual way to obtain our requests, than by turning our selves to the Angels and Saints, and importuning them to sollicite God for us; especially if we should order the matter so, as to make ten times more frequent Addresses to these, than we do to God and our Blessed Saviour, and in comparison of the other, to neglect these; we cannot certainly think any more able to help us and do us good, than the great God of Heaven and Earth, *the God* (as St. Paul styles him) *that heareth Prayers, and therefore unto him should all flesh come.* We cannot certainly think any Intercessor so powerful and prevalent with God, as his only and dearly beloved Son, offering up our Prayers to God in Heaven, by vertue of that most acceptable and invaluable Sacrifice,

ficé, which he offered to him on Earth ; we cannot surely think, that there is so much Goodness any where as in God, that in any of the Angels or Saints, or even in the Blessed Mother of our Lord, there is more Mercy and Compassion for Sinners and a tenderer sense of our Infirmities, than in the Son of God. *Who is at the right hand of his Father, to appear in the Presence of God for us* ; we are sure that God always hears the Petitions which we put up to him, and so does the Son of God, by whom we put them up to the Father, because he also is *God blessed for evermore*. But we are not sure that the Angels and Saints hear our Prayers, because we are sure that they are neither Omniscient nor Omnipresent, and we are not sure, nor probably certain, that our Prayers are made known to them any other way ; there being no Revelation of God to that purpose ; we are sure that God hath declared himself to be a jealous God, and that he will not give his Honour to another ; and we are not sure but that Prayer is part of the Honour which is due to God alone ; and if it were not, we can hardly think but that

that God should be so far from being pleased, with our making so frequent use of those other Mediators and Intercessors, and from granting our desires the sooner upon that account: That on the contrary we have reason to think, he should be highly offended; when he himself is ready to receive all our Petitions, and hath appointed a great Mediator to that purpose, to see more Addresses made to, and by the Angels and Saints, and Blessed Virgin, than to himself by his Blessed Son; and to see the Worship of himself almost jostled out, by the Devotion of People to Saints and Angels, and the Blessed Mother of our Lord; a thing which he *never Commanded*, and which so far as appears by Scripture, *never came into his mind*. I have been the longer upon this matter, to shew how unreasonable and needless at the best, this more than half part of the Religion of the Church of *Rome* is; and how safely it may be let alone.

But now on the other hand, if they be mistaken in these things, as we can demonstrate from Scripture they are, the danger is infinitely great on that side, for then they oppose an Institution

stitution of Christ, who appointed the Sacrament to be received in both kinds; and they involve themselves in a great danger of the guilt of Idolatry, and our common Christianity in the scandal and reproach of it. And this without any necessity, *since God hath required none of these things at our hands*; and after all the bustle which hath been made about them, the utmost they pretend (which yet they are not able to make good) is, that these things may Lawfully be done, and at the same time they cannot deny, but that if the Church had not enjoyned them they might Lawfully be let alone; and can any thing be more unreasonable, than so pertinaciously to insist upon things so hard (I might say) impossible to be defended or excused, and which by their own acknowledgment are of no great weight and necessity; in which we are certainly safe in not doing them, if they should prove Lawful; but if they do not prove so, they are in a most dangerous condition; so that here is certain safety on the one hand, and the danger of damnation on the other; which is as great odds as is possible.

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And they must not tell us that they are in no danger, because they are infallible, and cannot be mistaken; they must prove that point a great deal better than they have yet done, before it can signifie any thing either to our Satisfaction or their Safety.

I might have insisted more largely upon each of these Particulars, any one of which is of weight to incline a Man to that Religion, which hath such an advantage on its side, but all of them together makes so Powerful an Argument to an unprejudiced Person, as must almost irresistably determine his choice, for most of the Particulars are so evident, that they cannot, upon the very mention and proposal of them, be denied to be clear Advantages on our side.

And now, to use the words of St. Peter, *I testifie unto you, that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand*, that the Reformed Religion which we profess, and which by the goodness of God is by Law established in this Nation, is the true Ancient Christianity, the Faith which was at first delivered to the Saints, and which is conveyed down to us in the Writings
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of the Apostles and the Evangelists of our Lord and Saviour: Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, for he is Faithful that hath promised, which is the Second part of the Text; the encouragement which the Apostle gives us to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering; he is Faithful that hath promised to give us his Holy Spirit to lead us into all Truth, to stablish, strengthen, and settle us in the Profession of it, to support and comfort us under all Tryals and Temptations, and to seal us up to the day of Redemption, and he is faithful that hath promised to reward our constancy and fidelity to him and his Truth, with a Crown of everlasting life and Glory. Wherefore my beloved Brethren be ye steadfast and unmoveable, and alwayes abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; for he is faithful that hath promised; and let us provoke one another to Charity and Good Works, which are the great Ornament and Glory of any Religion, and so much the more, because the day approacheth in which God will judge the belief and lives of Men by Jesus Christ, not according to the
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imperious and uncharitable dictates of any Church, but according to the Gospel of his Son. *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory now and for ever.*

Now the God of Peace which brought again from the Dead the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you Perfect in every good word and work; working in you that which is pleasing in his Sight. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your Hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

A
S E R M O N.

2 COR. V. 7.

For we walk by Faith, not by Sight:

IN the latter part of the former Chapter, the Apostle declares what it was that was the great support of Christians, under the Persecutions and Sufferings which beset them; viz. the Assurance of a Blessed Resurrection to another life, Verse 14. *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus; for which cause, saith he, verse 16. we faint not, but though our outward Man perish, our inward Man is renewed day by day; that is, though our Bodies, by Reason of the Hardships and Sufferings which we undergo, are*
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continually decaying and declining; yet our Minds grow every day more healthful and vigorous, and gain new strength and resolution, by contemplating the Glory and Reward of another World, and as it were feeding upon them by Faith; *for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*

And he resumes the same Argument again at the beginning of this Chapter: *for we know, that if our Earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens; that is, we are firmly perswaded, that when we die, we shall but exchange these Earthly and Perishing Bodies, these Houses of Clay, for a Heavenly Mansion, which will never decay nor come to ruine: from whence he concludes, Verse 6. Therefore we are always confident, διαρρήντες ἐν παντί, therefore what ever happens to us, we are always of good courage, and see no reason to be afraid of Death; knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body,*
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we are absent from the Lord; that is, since our continuance in the Body is to our disadvantage, and while we live we are absent from our Happiness; and when we die, we shall then enter upon the Possession of it. That which gives us this confidence and good courage, is our Faith; for tho' we be not actually possessors of this Happiness which we speak of, yet we have a firm persuasion of the reality of it, which is enough to support our Spirits and keep up our Courage under all afflictions and adversities whatsoever, Verse 7. *for we walk by Faith, not by Sight.*

These words come in by way of *Parenthesis*, in which the Apostle declares in general, what is the swaying and governing Principle of a Christian life; not only in case of persecution and affliction, but under all events, and in every condition of Humane life; and that is, Faith; in opposition to Sight and present Enjoyment: *we walk by Faith, and not by Sight. We walk by Faith*; whatever Principle sways and governs a Mans life and actions, he is said to walk and live by it. And as here a Christian is said to *walk by Faith*, so elsewhere the just is said to *live by Faith*.

Faith is the Principle which animates all his resolutions and actions.

And not by Sight. The word is, *ἐᾶς*, which signifies the thing it self in present view and possession, in opposition to a firm perswasion of things future and invisible. Sight is the thing in Hand, and Faith the thing only in Hope and Expectation. Sight is a clear view and apprehension of things present and near to us; Faith an obscure discovery and apprehension of things at a distance: So the Apostle tells us, 2 Cor. 13. 12. *Now we see through a Glass darkly*; this is Faith; *but then face to face*, this is present sight, as one Man sees another face to face; and thus likewise the same Apostle distinguisheth betwixt Hope and Sight, Rom. 8. 24. 25. *Hope that is seen, is not Hope*; for what a Man sees, why doth he yet Hope for it? but if we Hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Sight is possession and enjoyment, Faith is the firm perswasion and expectation of a thing; and this the Apostle tells us was the governing principle of a Christian's life; for we walk by Faith, and not by Sight; from which words I shall observe these Three things.

I. That

I. That Faith is the Governing Principle, and that which bears the great sway in the Life and Actions of a Christian; *we walk by Faith*; that is, we Order and Govern our Lives in the Power and Virtue of this Principle.

II. Faith is a degree of assent inferior to that of Sense. This is sufficient-intimated in the opposition betwixt Faith and Sight. He had said before, that *whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord*; and gives this as a Reason and Proof of our absence from the Lord, *for we walk by Faith, and not by Sight*; that is, whilst we are in the Body, we do not see and enjoy, but believe and expect; if we were present with the Lord, then Faith would cease, and be turned into Sight; but tho' we have not that assurance of another world, which we shall have when we come to see and enjoy these things, yet we are firmly perswaded of them.

III. Notwithstanding Faith be an inferior degree of Assurance, yet 'tis a Principle of sufficient power to govern our Lives; *we walk by Faith*; it is such

an Assurance as hath an influence upon our Lives.

I. That Faith is the Governing Principle; and that which bears the great sway in the Life and Actions of a Christian. *We walk by Faith*; that is, we Order and Govern our Lives in the Power and Virtue of this Principle: A Christian's Life consists in obedience to the will of God; that is, in a readiness to do what he commands, and in a willingness to suffer what he calls us to; and the great Arguments and Encouragements hereto, are such things as are the Objects of Faith, and not of Sense; such things as are absent and future, and not present and in possession; for Instance, the Belief of an invisible God, of a secret Power and Providence, that Orders and Governs all things, that can bless or blast us, and all our Designs and Undertakings, according as we demean our selves towards him, and endeavour to approve our selves to him; the Perswasion of a secret aid and influence always ready at hand, to keep us from Evil, and to strengthen and assist us to that which is good; more especially the firm Belief, and expectation

tion of the Happiness of Heaven, and the glorious Rewards of another world, which tho' they be now at a distance, and invisible to us, yet being grounded upon the Promise of God *that cannot lie*, shall certainly be made good.

And this Faith, this firm Perswasion of absent and invisible things, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* tells us, was the great Principle of the Piety and Virtue of good Men from the beginning of the World. This he calls, *Ch. 11. verse 1.* the *πίστις*, or the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the proof or evidence of things not seen, *viz.* a firm perswasion of the Being and Providence of God, and of the Truth and Faithfulness of his Promises: Such was the Faith of *Abel*, he believed *that there was a God, and that he was a rewarder of those that faithfully serve him*: Such was the Faith of *Noah*, who being warned of God, of things at a great distance, and not seen as yet, notwithstanding believed the Divine Prediction concerning the Flood, and prepared an Ark: Such also was the Faith of *Abraham*, concerning a numerous Posterity by *Isaac*, and the Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*; and

such likewise was the Faith of *Moses*, he did as firmly believe the invisible God, and the recompence of reward, as if he had beheld them with his eyes.

And of this Recompence of Reward, we Christians have a much clearer revelation, and much greater assurance, than former Ages and Generations had; and the firm belief and perswasion of this, is the great Motive and Argument to a Holy life: *The hope which is set before us*, of obtaining the Happiness, and the fear of incurring the Misery, of another world. This made the Primitive Christians, with so much patience to bear the Sufferings and Persecutions, with so much constancy to venture upon the dangers and inconveniencies which the love of God and Religion exposed them to.

Under the former Dispensation of the Law, the good Men received good hopes of the Rewards of another life, yet these things were but obscurely revealed to them, and the great inducements of Obedience were Temporal Rewards and Punishments; the promises of long life, and peace, and plenty, and prosperity, in that good Land which God had given them, and the threatnings of
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War, and Famine, and Pestilence, and being delivered into Captivity. But now, *under the Gospel, Life and Immortality are brought to light*; and the great Arguments that bear sway with Christians, are the Promises of Everlasting Life, and the Threatnings of Eternal Misery; and the firm Belief and Persuasion of these, is now the great Principle that governs the Lives and Actions of good Men; for what will not Men do, that are really persuaded, that as they do demean themselves in this World, it will fare with them in the other? *That the Wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life Eternal.* I proceed to the

II. Observation, namely; That Faith is a Degree of Assent, inferiour to that of Sense. This is intimated in the Opposition betwixt Faith and Sight; *We walk by Faith, and not by Sight*; that is, we believe these things, and are confidently persuaded of the truth of them, tho we never saw them; and consequently cannot possibly have that Degree of Assurance concerning the Joys of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell,

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which those have who enjoy the One and endure the Other.

There are different Degrees of Assurance concerning things, arising from the different Degrees of Evidence we have for them: The highest Degree of Evidence we have for any thing, is our own Sense and Experience; and this is so firm and strong, that it is not to be shaken by the utmost Pretence of a Rational Demonstration; Men will trust their own Senses and Experience, against any subtilty of Reason whatsoever: But there are inferiour degrees of Assurance concerning things, as the Testimony and Authority of Persons every way credible; and this Assurance we have in this state concerning the things of another World, we believe with great Reason, that we have the Testimony of God concerning them, which is the highest kind of Evidence in it self; and we have all the reasonable assurance we can desire, that God hath testified these things, and this is the utmost assurance which things future and at a distance are capable of.

But yet it is an unreasonable obstinacy to deny, that this falls very much short of that degree of assurance which those

those Persons have concerning these things, who are now in the other World, and have the Sense and Experience of these things; and this is not only intimated here in the Text, in the Opposition of Faith and Sight, but is plainly exprest in other Texts of Scripture, 1 Cor. 13. 9, 10. *We know now but in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.* That degree of knowledge and assurance which we have in this Life is very imperfect, in comparison to what we shall have hereafter, and Verse 12. *We now see as through a Glass darkly, ἐν αἰνίγματι,* as in a Riddle, in which there is always a great deal of Obscurity; all which Expressions are certainly intended by way of abatement and diminution to the certainty of Faith; because it is plain, that by that which is in part or imperfect, the Apostle means Faith and Hope, which he tells us shall cease, when that which is perfect, meaning Vision and Sight, is come: We see likewise in Experience, that the Faith and Hope of the best Christians in this Life is accompanied with doubting concerning these things, and all doubting is a degree of uncertainty; but those blessed

fed Souls who are entred upon the Possession of Glory and Happiness; and those miserable Wretches who lye groaning under the Wrath of God and the Severity of his Justice, cannot possibly, if they would, have any doubt concerning the Truth and Reality of these things.

But however contentious Men may dispute against common Sense, this is so plain a Truth, that I will not labour in the farther Proof of it; nor indeed is it reasonable, while we are in this state, to expect that degree of assurance concerning the Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which the sight and sensible experience of them would give us; and that upon these Two Accounts;

1. Because our present state will not admit it; and,

2. If it would, it is not reasonable we should have it.

1. Our present state will not admit it; for while we are in this World, it is not possible we should have that sensible Experiment and Tryal how things are in the other. The things of the other World are remote from us, and far out of our Sight, and we cannot have any

any experimental knowledge of them, till we our selves enter into that state. Those who are already past into it know how things are ; those happy Souls who live in the reviving presence of God, and are possess of those joys which we cannot now conceive, understand these things in another manner, and have a more perfect assurance concerning them, than it is possible for any Man to have in this World ; and those wretched and miserable Spirits who feel the vengeance of God, and are plunged into the Horrors of Eternal Darkness, do believe upon irresistable evidence, and have other kind of Convictions of the Reality of that state, and the insupportable Misery of it, than any Man is capable of in this World.

2. If our present state would admit of this high degree of assurance ; it is not fit and reasonable that we should have it ; such an over-powering evidence would quite take away the virtue of Faith, and much lessen that of Obedience. Put the case that every Man, some considerable time before his departure out of this Life, were permitted to visit the other World, to assure him how things are there, to view the Mansions of the Blessed,

fed, and to survey the dark and loathsome Prisons of the Damned, to hear the lamentable outcrys of Miserable and Despairing Souls, and to see the inconceivable Anguish and Torments they are in ; after this, what virtue would it be in any Man to believe these things? He that had been there and seen them, could not dis-believe them if he would : Faith in this case would not be virtue, but necessity ; and therefore it is observable, that our Saviour doth not Pronounce them Blessed, who believed his Resurrection, upon the forcible evidence of their own Senses, but, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* They might be Happy in the Effects of that Faith, but there is no praise, no reward belongs to that Faith which is wrought in Man by so violent and irresistible an evidence. It was the great commendation of *Abraham's* Faith, that against hope he believed in hope, he believed the promise of God concerning a thing in it self very improbable ; but it is no commendation at all to believe the things which we have seen, because they admit of no manner of dispute ; no Objection can be offered to shake our assent, unless we will run to the extremity of Scepticism ; for if we will

will believe any thing at all, we must yield to the Evidence of Sense: This does so violently enforce our assent, that there can be no Virtue in such a Faith.

And as this would take away the Virtue of Faith, so it would very much lessen that of our Obedience. It is hardly to be imagined, that any Man who had seen the Blessed condition of good Men in another World, and been an Eye-witness of the intolerable Torments of Sinners, should ever after be tempted knowingly to do any thing that would deprive him of that Happiness, or bring him *into that place of Torment*: Such a sight could not chuse but affect a Man as long as he lived; and leave such impressions upon his mind, of the indispensable necessity of a Holy life, and of the infinite danger of a wicked course, that we might sooner believe that all the Men in the World should conspire to kill one another; than that such a Man, by consenting to any deliberate Act of Sin should wilfully throw himself into those flames: No, his Mind would be continually haunted with those Furies he had seen Tormenting Sinners in another World, and the fearful Shrieks and Outcries of Miserable

ble Souls, would be perpetually ringing in his Ears; and the Man would have so lively and terrible an imagination of the danger he was running himself upon, that no Temptation would be strong enough to conquer his fears, and to make him careless of his life and actions, after he had once seen *how fearful a thing it was to fall into the hands of the living God*: So that in this case, the Reason of Mens obedience would be so violent, that the virtue of it must be very little; for what praise is due to any Man, not to do those things which none but a perfect mad Man would do? For certainly that Man must be besides himself, that could by any Temptation be seduced to live a wicked life, after he had seen the state of good and bad Men in the other World; the glorious Rewards of Holiness and Virtue, and the dismal event of a vitious and sinful course: God hath designed this Life for the Trial of our Virtue, and the exercise of our obedience, but there would hardly be any place for this, if there were a free and easie passage for us into the other World, to see the true state of things there. What argument would it be of any Mans virtue to forbear sinning, after
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he had been in *Hell*, and seen the miserable end of Sinners? But I proceed to the

III. And *Last* Observation; namely, That notwithstanding Faith be an inferior degree of Assent, yet it is a Principle of sufficient force and power to Govern our lives; *we walk by Faith*. Now, that the belief of any thing may have its Effect upon us, it is requisite that we be satisfied of these Two things.

1. Of the Certainty and of the great Concernment of the thing; for if the thing be altogether uncertain, it will not move us at all, we shall do nothing towards the obtaining of it, if it be good; nor for the avoiding and preventing of it, if it be evil; and if we are certain of the thing, yet if we apprehend it to be of no great Moment and Concernment, we shall be apt to slight it, as not worth our regard; but the Rewards and Punishments of another world, which the Gospel propounds to our Faith, are fitted to work upon our Minds; both upon account of the Certainty and Concernment of them. For,

1. We have sufficient Assurance of the Truth of these things, as much as

we are well capable of in this state. Concerning things future and at a distance, we have the dictates of our Reason arguing us into this Perswasion, from the consideration of the Justice of the Divine Providence, and from the promiscuous and unequal Administration of things in this world; from whence wise men in all ages have been apt to conclude, that there will be another state of things after this life, wherein rewards and punishments shall be equally distributed. We have the general consent of Mankind in this matter: and to assure us, that these Reasonings are true, we have a most credible Revelation of these things, God having sent his Son from Heaven to declare it to us, and given us a sensible demonstration of the thing, in his Resurrection from the dead, and his visible Ascension into Heaven; so that there is no kind of evidence wanting, that the thing is capable of, but only our own sense and experience of these things, of which we are not capable in this present state. And there is no Objection against all this, but what will bring all things into uncertainty, which do not come under our Senses, and which we our selves have not seen.

Nor

Nor is there any considerable Interest to hinder Men from the Belief of these things, or to make them hesitate about them; for as for the other World, if at last there should prove to be no such thing, our Condition after Death will be the same with the Condition of those who disbelieve these things; because all will be extinguish'd by Death: but if things fall out otherwise (as most undoubtedly they will) and our Souls after this Life do pass into a State of Everlasting Happiness or Misery, then our great Interest plainly lies, in preparing our selves for this State; and there is no other way to secure the great Concernments of another World, but by believing those things to be true, and governing all the Actions of our Lives by this Belief. For as for the Interests of *this* Life, they are but short and transitory, and consequently of no Consideration in comparison of the things which are Eternal; and yet (as I have often told you) setting aside the case of Persecution for Religion, there is no real Interest of this World, but it may be as well promoted and pursued to as great Advantage, nay, usually, to a far greater, by him that believes these things, and lives according-

ly, than by any other Person: For the Belief of the Rewards and Punishments of another World is the greatest Motive and Encouragement to Virtue; and as all Vice is naturally attended with some temporal Inconvenience, so the Practice of all Christian Virtues doth in its own Nature tend both to the Welfare of Particular Persons, and to the Peace and Prosperity of Mankind.

But that which ought to weigh very much with us, is, That we have abundantly more Assurance of the Recompence of another World, than we have of many things in this World, which yet have a greater Influence upon our Actions, and govern the Lives of the most prudent and considerate Men. Men generally hazard their Lives and Estates upon Terms of greater Uncertainty, than the Assurance which we have of another World. Men venture to take Physick upon *probable* Grounds of the Integrity and Skill of their Physician, and yet the want of either of these may hazard their Lives; and Men take Physick upon greater Odds; for it certainly causeth Pain and Sickness, and doth but uncertainly procure and recover Health; the Patient is sure to be made sick, but not certain

certain to be made well ; and yet the Danger of being worse, if not of dying, on the one Hand, and the Hope of Success and Recovery on the other, make this Hazard and Trouble reasonable. Men venture their whole Estates to Places which they never saw ; and that there are such Places, they have only the concurrent Testimony and Agreement of Men ; nay, perhaps, have only spoken with them that have spoken with those that have been there. No Merchant ever insisted upon the Evidence of a Miracle to be wrought, to satisfy him that there were such Places as the *East* and *West-Indies*, before he would venture to Trade thither : And yet *this* Assurance God hath been pleased to give the World of a state beyond the Grave, and of a blessed Immortality in another Life.

Now what can be the Reason that so slender Evidence, so small a degree of Assurance will serve to encourage Men to seek after the things of this World with great Care and Industry ; and yet a great deal more will not suffice to put them effectually upon looking after the great Concernments of another World, which are infinitely more considerable ?

No other Reason of this can be given, but that Men are partial in their Affections towards these things. It is plain they have not the same Love for God and Religion which they have for this World, and the Advantages of it ; and therefore it is, that a less degree of Assurance will engage them to seek after the one, than the other ; and yet the Reason is much stronger on the other side : For the greater the Benefit and Good is, which is offered to us, we should be the more eager to seek after it, and should be content to venture upon less Probability. Upon *excessive* Odds, a Man would venture upon very small Hopes ; for a *mighty* Advantage, a Man would be content to run a great Hazard of his Labour and Pains upon little Assurance : Where a Man's *Life* is concern'd, every Suspicion of Danger will make a Man careful to avoid it : And will nothing affright Men from Hell, unless God carry them thither, and shew them the place of Torments, and the Flames of that Fire which shall *never be quenched* ?

I do not speak this, as if these things had not abundant Evidence ; I have shewn that they have ; but to convince
Men,

Men, how unreasonable and cruelly partial they are about the Concernments of their Souls, and their Eternal Happiness.

2. Supposing these things to be real and certain, they are of infinite Concernment to us: For what can concern us more, than that Eternal and Unchangeable State in which we must be fixt and abide for ever? If so vast a Concern will not move us, and have no Influence upon the Government of our Lives and Actions, we do not deserve the Name of Reasonable Creatures. What Consideration can be set before Men, who are not touched with the Sense of so great an Interest, as that of our Happy or Miserable Being to all Eternity? Can we be so solicitous and careful about the Concernment of a few Days; and is it nothing to us what becomes of us for ever? Are we so tenderly concerned to avoid Poverty and Disgrace, Persecution and Suffering in this World; and shall we not much more *flee from the wrath which is to come*, and endeavour to *escape the damnation of Hell*? Are the slight and transitory Enjoyments of this World worth so much Thought and Care? And is an Eternal Inheri-

tance in the Heavens not worth the looking after? As there is no Proportion, betwixt the things which are Temporal and the things which are Eternal, so we ought in all Reason, to be infinitely more concerned for the One than for the Other.

The proper Inference from all this Discourse is, That we would endeavour, to strengthen in our selves this great Principle of a Christian Life, the Belief of another World, by representing to our selves all those Arguments and Considerations which may confirm us in this Perswasion. The more reasonable our Faith is, and the surer grounds it is built upon; the more firm it will abide, when it comes to the tryal, against all the impressions of temptations and assaults of Persecution: If our Faith of another World be only a strong imagination of these things, *so soon as tribulation ariseth, it will wither; because it hath no root in it self*: Upon this account the Apostle so often exhorts Christians, to endeavour *to be established in the Truth, to be rooted and grounded in the Faith*, that when Persecution comes, they may *continue stedfast and unmovable*. The firmness of our Belief will have

a great influence upon our Lives; *if we be stedfast and unmovable in our perswasion of these things, we shall be abundant in the work of the Lord.* The Apostle joins these together, 1 Cor. 15. 58. *Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* Stedfast and unmovable, in what? In the belief of a blessed Resurrection; which the more firmly any Man believes, the more active and industrious will he be in the Work and Service of God.

And that our Faith may have a constant and powerful influence upon our Lives, we should frequently revolve in our Minds the thoughts of another World, and of that vast Eternity which we shall shortly launch into. The great disadvantage of the Arguments fetcht from another world, is this, That these things are at a distance from us, and not sensible to us, and therefore we are not apt to be so affected with them: Present and sensible things weigh down all other Considerations. And therefore to balance this disadvantage, we should often have these Thoughts in our Minds, and inculcate

culcate upon our selves the certainty of these things, and the infinite concernment of them : we should reason thus with our selves ; if these things be true, and will certainly be, why should they not be to me, as if they were actually present ? Why should not I always live, as if Heaven were open to my view, and *I saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, with Crowns of Glory in his hands*, ready to be set upon the Heads of all those who continue faithful and obedient to him ? And why should I not be as much afraid to commit any Sin, as if *Hell were naked before me*, and I saw the astonishing Miseries of the Damned ?

Thus we should, by frequent Meditation, represent these great things to our selves, and bring them nearer to our Minds, and oppose to the present temptations of Sense, the great and endless Happiness and Misery of the other World. And if we would but thus exercise our selves about *the things which are not seen*, and make Eternity familiar to our selves, by a frequent Meditation of it, we should be very little moved with present and sensible things ; we should *walk and live* by Faith, as
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the Men of the World do by Sense, and be more serious and earnest in the Pursuit of our great and everlasting Interest, than they are in the pursuit of Sensual Enjoyments, and should make it the great Business of this present and temporal Life, to secure a Future and Eternal Happiness.

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The first of the world's great religions, the Jewish, is a monotheistic religion, and the second, the Christian, is a monotheistic religion. The third, the Mohammedan, is a monotheistic religion. The fourth, the Buddhist, is a polytheistic religion. The fifth, the Hindu, is a polytheistic religion. The sixth, the Jain, is a polytheistic religion. The seventh, the Sikh, is a monotheistic religion. The eighth, the Zoroastrian, is a monotheistic religion. The ninth, the Taoist, is a polytheistic religion. The tenth, the Confucian, is a polytheistic religion. The eleventh, the Shinto, is a polytheistic religion. The twelfth, the Judo, is a polytheistic religion. The thirteenth, the Zen, is a polytheistic religion. The fourteenth, the Nichiren, is a monotheistic religion. The fifteenth, the Pure Land, is a monotheistic religion. The sixteenth, the Amida, is a monotheistic religion. The seventeenth, the Mikoto, is a polytheistic religion. The eighteenth, the Shintu, is a polytheistic religion. The nineteenth, the Shinto, is a polytheistic religion. The twentieth, the Shinto, is a polytheistic religion.

A
S E R M O N,

On H E B. X. 38.

*But if any Man draw back, my Soul
shall have no Pleasure in him.*

TH E great Design of this Epistle, (whoever was the Author of it, which I shall not now enquire into) is plainly this, to confirm the *Jews*, who were but newly converted to *Christianity*, in the stedfast Profession of that Faith, which they had embraced, and to arm them against that Temptation, which Christians were then exposed to, *viz.* the fierce and cruel Persecutions, which threatned those of that Profession.

And

And to this purpose, he represents to them, the excellency of that Religion, above any other former Revelation, that God had made of himself to the World; both in respect of the Author and Revealer of it, who was the Son of God, and in respect of the Revelation it self; which, as it contains better, and more perfect Directions of a good Life, so likewise more powerful and effectual Motives thereto, better Promises, and more terrible Threatnings, than were annexed to the Observation of the Jewish Law, or clearly and certainly discoverable by the Light of Nature. From these Considerations, he earnestly persuades them, all along throughout this Epistle, to continue constant in the Profession of this Faith, and not to suffer themselves to be frightened out of it by the Terrour of Persecution; Chap. 2. V. 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip; and Chap. 4. 1. Let us therefore fear, lest a Promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of you should come short of it, and verse 23. of this Chapter, Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith, without wavering*

ing; and to encourage them to constancy, he sets before them, the Glorious Rewards and Recompences of the Gospel; Verse 35. *Cast not away therefore your Confidence*, τὴν παρρησίαν ὑμῶν, your free and open Profession of Christianity, which hath great Recompence of Reward.

And then on the other hand, to deter them from Apostacy from this Profession, he represents to them the horrible danger of it, here in the Text, *But if any man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him.*

I shall briefly explain the Words, and then prosecute that which I mainly intended in them; *if any Man draw back*, Ἐὰν ὑποστρίβηται: These Words, with the foregoing, are cited out of the Prophet *Habakkuk*, Chap. 2. Verse 3, 4, and they are cited by the Apostle, according to the Translation of the LXX. which differs somewhat from the *Hebrew*; and the difference ariseth from the various readings of the *Hebrew* Word, which is rendered by the LXX. *to draw back*; but by the change of a Letter signifies *to be lifted up*, as we render it in the Prophet; but however that be, the Apostle follows the Translation of the

the LXX. and accommodates it to his Purpose. Ἐὰν ὑποσείληται, if any Man draw back; the Word signifies to keep back, to withdraw, to sneak and slink away out of fear, to fail, or faint in any Enterprize: And thus this Word is rendered in the New Testament, *Acts* 20. 20. Ἐδὲν ὑπεσείλαμην, I did not with-hold, or keep back any thing that was profitable for you; and so it is said of St. Peter, *Gal.* 2. 12. ὑπέσειλθεν ἑαυτὸν, *he slunk away, or withdrew himself, fearing them of the Circumcision*; and the Hebrew Word, which is here rendered by the LXX. *to draw back*, is elsewhere rendered by ἐκλείπειν, which is *to fail or faint*; from all which it appears, that by *drawing back*, the Apostle here means, Mens quitting their Profession of Christianity, and slinking out of it, for fear of suffering for it.

My Soul shall have no Pleasure in him: These Words are plainly a μείωσις, and less is said than is meant; for the meaning is, that God will be extremely displeased with them, and punish them very severely. The like Figure to this, you have *Psal.* 5. 4. *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in Wickedness,* which in the
next

next Verse is explained, by his hatred and detestation of those who are guilty of it, *Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity.* So that the plain sense of the words is this, that Apostasie from the profession of God's true Religion, is a thing highly provoking to him, and will be most severely punisht by him.

In speaking to this Argument, I shall consider these four things.

I. The Nature of this sin of Apostasie from Religion.

II. The several steps and degrees of it.

III. The heinousness of it.

IV. The great danger of it, and the terrible punishment it exposeth men to. And when I have spoken to these, I shall conclude all with a short Exhortation, *to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.*

I. We will consider the Nature of this sin of Apostasie from Religion; and it consists in forsaking or renouncing the Profession of Religion, whether it be by an open-declaration in words, or a virtual

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tual declaration of it by our actions; for it comes all to one in the sight of God, and the different manner of doing it, does not alter the nature of the thing: He indeed that renounceth Religion, by an open declaration in words, offers the greatest and boldest defiance to it; but he is likewise an Apostate, who silently withdraws himself from the profession of it, who quits it for his interest, or for fear disowns it, and sneaks out of the Profession of it, and forsakes the Communion of those who own it. Thus *Demas* was an Apostate, in quitting Christianity for some worldly interest. *Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world,* saith *St. Paul*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 10. And those whom our Saviour describes, *Mat.* 13. 20, 21. *who receiv'd the word into stony ground,* were Apostates out of fear, *they heard the word, and with joy receiv'd it, but having no root in themselves, they endured but for a while, and when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, presently they fall off.*

And there is likewise a partial Apostasie from Christianity, when some Fundamental Article of it is denied, whereby in effect and by consequence, the whole Christian Faith is overthrown. Of this

this *Hymeneus* and *Philetus* were guilty, of whom the Apostle says, *that they erred concerning the truth, saying that the Resurrection was past already, and thereby overthrew the faith of some,* 2 Tim. 2. 17, 18. That is, they turned the Resurrection into an Allegory, and did thereby really destroy a most Fundamental Article of the Christian Religion.

So that to make a man an Apostate, it is not necessary that a man should solemnly renounce his Baptism, and declare Christianity to be false; there are several other ways whereby a man may bring himself under this guilt; as by a silent quitting of his Religion, and withdrawing himself from the Communion of all that profess it; by denying an Essential Doctrine of Christianity; by undermining the great End and Design of it, by teaching Doctrines which directly tend to encourage Men in impenitence, and a wicked course of life, nay, to Authorise all manner of impiety and vice, in telling Men that whatever they do they cannot Sin; for which, the Primitive Christians did look upon the *Gnosticks*, as no better than Apostates from Christianity; and tho they retained the Name of Christians, yet not to

be truly and really so. And there is likewise a partial Apostacy from the Christian Religion; of which I shall speak under the

II. Head I propos'd ; which was, to consider the several sorts and degrees of Apostacy. The highest of all, is the renouncing and forsaking of Christianity, or of some Essential part of it, which is a virtual Apostasie from it. But there are several tendencies towards this, which they who are guilty of, are in some degree guilty of this Sin. As

1. Indifferency in Religion, and want of all sort of Concernment for it: when a Man, tho he never quitted his Religion, yet is so little concerned for it, that a very small Occasion or Temptation would make him do it; he is contented to be reckoned in the number of those who profess it, so long as it is the Fashion, and he finds no great Inconvenience by it; but is so indifferent in his Mind about it, (*like Gallio, who minded none of those things*) that he can turn himself into any other Shape, when his Interest requires it; so that tho he never actually deserted it, yet he is a kind of Apostate, in the preparation
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and disposition of his Mind: And to such Persons, that Title which *Solomon* gives to some, may fitly enough be applied, *they are Backsliders in Heart.*

2. Another tendency to this Sin, and a great degree of it, is withdrawing from the Publick Marks and Testimonies of the Profession of Religion, by forsaking the Assemblies of Christians for the Worship and Service of God; to withdraw our selves from those, for fear of Danger or Suffering, is a kind of Denyal of our Religion. And this was the case of some in the Apostles time, when Persecution grew hot, and the open Profession of Christianity dangerous; to avoid this Danger, many appeared not in the Assemblies of Christians, for fear of being observed and brought into trouble for it. This the Apostle taxeth some for, in this Chapter, and speaketh of it as a letting go our Profession, and a kind of deserting of Christianity, v. 23, 25. *Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, not forsaking the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is:* He doth not say they had quitted their Profession, but they had but a

loose hold of it, and were silently stealing away from it.

3. A light temper of Mind, which easily receives Impressions from those who lie in wait to deceive, and seduce Men from the Truth. When Men are not well rooted and established in Religion, they are apt to be inveigled by the crafty Insinuations of Seducers, to be moved with every wind of Doctrine, and to be easily shaken in Mind, by every trifling piece of Sophistry, that is confidently obtruded upon them for a weighty Argument.

Now this is a temper of Mind which disposeth Men to Apostasie, and renders them an easie Prey to every one that takes a Pleasure and a Pride in making Profelytes. It is true indeed, a Man should always have a Mind ready to entertain Truth, when it is fairly proposed to him; but the main things of Religion are so plainly revealed, and lie so obvious to every ordinary capacity, that every Man may discern them; and when he hath once entertained them, ought to be stedfast and unmovable in them, and not suffer himself to be whiffled out of them, by any insignificant noise about the Infallibility of a Visible Church; much less
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ought he to be moved by any Man's uncharitableness and positiveness, in damning all that are not of his Mind.

There are some things so very plain, not only in Scripture, but to the common Reason of Mankind, that no subtilty of Discourse, no pretended Authority, or even Infallibility of any Church, ought to stagger us in the least about them; as that we ought not, or cannot believe any thing in direct contradiction to Sense and Reason; that the People ought to Read and Study the Holy Scriptures, and to serve God and pray to him in a Language which they understand; that they ought to receive the Sacrament as our Saviour instituted and appointed it, that is, in both kinds; that it can neither be our Duty, nor Lawful to do that which God hath forbidden; as he hath done the Worship of Images in the Second Commandment, as plainly as words can do it. Upon any one of these Points, a Man would fix his foot, and stand alone against the whole World.

4. Another Degree of Apostasie is, a departure from the Purity of the Christian Doctrine and Worship, in

a gross and notorious manner. This is a partial, tho not a total Apostasie from the Christian Religion ; and there have been, and still are some in the World, who are justly Charged with this degree of Apostasie from Religion; namely such, as tho they retain and profess the Belief of all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and Worship the only true God, and him whom he hath sent, Jesus Christ ; yet have greatly perverted the Christian Religion, by superinducing, and adding new Articles of Faith, and gross Corruptions, and Superstitions in Worship, and imposing upon Men the Belief and Practice of these, as necessary to Salvation. And St. Paul is my Warrant for this Censure, who chargeth those who added to the Christian Religion, the Necessity of Circumcision, and observing the Law of Moses, and thereby perverted the Gospel of Christ, as guilty in some degree of Apostasie from Christianity ; for he calls it, *preaching another Gospel*, Gal. 1. 7, 8. *There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ ; but tho we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel to you, than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.* And those who
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were seduced by these Teachers, he chargeth them with having in some sort quitted the Gospel of Christ, and embraced another Gospel, V. 6. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ, unto another Gospel*: So that they who thus pervert and corrupt the Christian Doctrine or Worship, are plainly guilty of a partial Apostasie from Christianity; and they who quit the purity of the Christian Doctrine and Worship, and go over to the Communion of those who have thus perverted Christianity, are in a most dangerous state, and in the Judgment of St. Paul, are in some sort *removed unto another Gospel*. I shall now proceed, in the

III. Place, to consider the Heinousness of this Sin. And it will appear to be very Heinous, if we consider, what an affront it is to God, and how great a contempt of him; when God hath revealed his will to Mankind, and sent no less Person than his own Son out of his own Bosom to do it, and hath given such Testimonies to him from Heaven, by *signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost*;

Ghost; when he hath transmitted down to us, so Faithful a Record of this Revelation, and of the Miracles wrought to confirm it, in the Books of the Holy Scriptures, and when we our selves have so often declared our firm belief of this Revelation; yet after all this to fall from it, and deny it, or any part of it, or to embrace Doctrines and Practices plainly contrary to it: This certainly cannot be done without the greatest affront and contempt of the Testimonies of God himself; for it is in effect, and by interpretation, to declare, that either we do not believe what God says, or that we do not fear what he can do. So St. John tells us, 1 Ep. 5. 10. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar, because he believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son.*

And all along in this Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle sets himself to aggravate this Sin; calling it *an Evil Heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God*, Ch. 3. 12. And he frequently calls it so, κατ' ἐξοχὴν, and by way of eminency, as being of all Sins the greatest and most heinous. Ch. 10. 26. *If we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth.* That the Apostle here speaks

speaks of the Sin of Apostasie, is plain from the whole scope of his discourse; for having exhorted them before, *v. 23. to hold fast the Profession of their Faith without wavering, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together*, he immediately adds, *for if we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth*; that is, if we fall off from Christianity, after we have embraced it. And, *Ch. 12 1. let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us*; that is, the great Sin of Apostasie from Religion; to which they were then so strongly tempted by that fierce Persecution which attended it; and therefore he adds, *let us run with patience the race which is set before us*; that is, let us arm our selves with patience against the Sufferings we are like to meet with in our Christian course. To oppose the Truth, and resist the clear Evidence of it, is a great Sin, and Men are justly condemned for it. *John 3. 19. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the World, and men loved darkness rather than light.* But to desert the Truth, after we have been convinced of it, to fall off from the Profession of it, after we have embraced it; is a much greater Sin. Opposition to the Truth,
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may proceed in a great measure from ignorance and prejudice, which is a great extenuation; and therefore St. Paul tells us, that after all his violent Persecution of Christianity, *he found Mercy, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief.* To revolt from the Truth, after we have made profession of it; *after we have known the way of righteousness, to turn from the holy commandment;* this is the great aggravation. The Apostle makes wilfulness, an usual ingredient into the Sin of Apostasie, *if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth.*

And as this Sin is one of the greatest affronts to God, so it is the highest and most effectual disparagement of Religion; for it is not so much considered, what the Enemies of Religion speak against it, *because they speak evil of the things which they know not,* and of which they have had no Tryal and Experience; but he that falls off from Religion, after he hath made profession of it, declares to the World, that he hath tryed it, and dislikes it; and pretends to leave it, because he hath not found that Truth and Goodness in it which he expected; and upon long experience
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of it, sees reason to prefer another Religion before it: So that nothing can be more despiteful to Religion than this, and more likely to bring it into contempt; and therefore the Apostle (v. 29. of this Chapter) calls it a *trampling under foot the Son of God, and making the Blood of the Covenant a profane thing, and offering despite to the Spirit of Grace*: for we cannot put a greater Scorn upon the Son of God, who revealed this Doctrine to the World; nor upon his Blood, which was shed to confirm and seal the Truth of it; and upon the Holy Ghost, who came down in miraculous Gifts, to give Testimony to it; than notwithstanding all this, to renounce this Doctrine, and to forsake this Religion. But we shall yet farther see the heinousness of this Sin, in the terrible Punishment it exposeth Men to; which was the

IV. And *Last* thing I proposed to consider. And this is represented to us in a most terrible manner, not only in this Epistle, but in other Places of Scripture. This Sin is placed in the highest rank of pardonable Sins, and next to the Sin against the Holy Ghost, which

which our Saviour declares to be absolutely unpardonable. And indeed the Scripture speaks very doubtfully of the pardonableness of this Sin, as being near akin to that against the Holy Ghost, being said to be an *Offering despite to the Spirit of Grace*. In the 6th Chapter of this Epistle, V. 4, 5, 6. the Apostle speaks in a very severe manner, concerning the state of those, who had apostatized from Christianity, after the solemn Profession of it in Baptism, *it is impossible for those who were once enlightened* (that is baptized) *and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift,* (that is Regeneration) *and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come,* (that is, have been instructed in the Christian Religion, and endowed with the miraculous Powers of the Gospel-Age, (for the Jews used to call the Age of the Messiah, *Seculum Futurum*, or the World to come) *it is impossible for those to be renewed again unto repentance*; where the least we can understand, by *impossible*, is, that it is extremely difficult; for so the word impossible is sometimes used; as when our Saviour says, *it is impossible*
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for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And, Ch. 10. 26. the Apostle speaking of the same thing, says, *if we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for sin; that is, they who renounce Christianity, since they reject the only way of expiation, there remains no more Sacrifice for their Sins.*

St. Peter likewise expresseth himself very severely concerning this sort of Persons, 2 Epist. 2. 20, 21. *For if after they have escaped the Pollutions of the World, through the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; (that is, after they have been brought from Heathenism to Christianity) they are entangled therein again, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.* He seems loth to say, how sad the Condition of such Persons is, but this he tells them, that it is much worse than when they were Heathens before; and he gives the Reason, *for it had been better for them, not to have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them.* And St. John calls this Sin of Apostasie, the *Sin unto Death*; and tho he do not forbid Christians
to

to pray for them that are guilty of it; yet he will not say, that they should pray for them. 1 Epist. 5. 16. If any Man see his Brother sin a Sin, which is not unto Death, he shall ask, and he shall give him Life, for them that sin not unto Death; there is a sin unto Death, I do not say, that he shall pray for it. Now that by this sin unto Death, the Apostle means Apostasie from the Christian Religion to Idolatry, is most probable from what follows, Verse 18. we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, (that is this Sin unto Death) but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not, (that is, he is preserved from Idolatry, unto which the Devil had seduced so great a part of Mankind) and we know that we are of God, and the whole World, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ καί τῳ, is under the dominion of that wicked one; (viz. the Devil, whom the Scripture elsewhere calls the God of this World;) and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, (that is, hath brought us from the Worship of false Gods, to the knowledge and Worship of the true God) and then he concludes, little Children, keep your selves from Idols; which

which caution hath no manner of dependence upon what went before, unless we understand *the Sin unto Death*, in this Sense; and it is the more probable, that it is so to be understood, because Apostasie is so often in this *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, called *the Sin*, by way of Eminency, as it is here, by St. *John*, *whosoever is born of God sinneth not*.

So that at the very best, the Scripture speaks doubtfully of the pardon of this sin; however, that the punishment of it, unrepented of, shall be very dreadful. It seems to be mildly exprest here in the Text, *If any man draw back, my Soul shall have no pleasure in him*: But it is the more severe for being exprest so mildly, according to the intention of the Figure here used; and therefore in the next words, this expression of Gods taking no pleasure in such Persons, is explained by their utter Ruin and Perdition; *But we are not of them that draw back unto Perdition*. And in several parts of this *Epistle*, there are very severe passages to this purpose; *Ch. 2. 2, 3. If the word spoken by Angels, was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect*

so great salvation? And Ch. 10. 26, 27. If we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary: he that despised Moses law, dyed without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, that hath trodden under foot the Son of God! &c. For we know him who hath said, Vengeance is mine, I will recompence, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his People; it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. What can be more severe and terrible than these expressions?

I will mention but one Text more, and that is Rev. 21. 8. where in the Catalogue of great Sinners, those who Apostatize from Religion, out of fear, do lead the Van; He that overcometh shall inherit all things, (which is elsewhere in this Book exprest, by continuing faithful unto the Death.) He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son; but the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and whoremongers,
and

and forcerers, and idolaters, and all lyars, shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. The fearful, and unbelievers, and lyars; that is, they who out of fear relapse into infidelity, and abide not in the Truth, shall be reckoned in the first rank of Offenders, and be punished accordingly.

And thus I have done with the Four things I propounded to speak to, from these words; the Nature of Apostasie; the several steps and degrees of it; the heinous Nature of this Sin; the danger of it, and the terrible punishment it exposeth Men to.

And is there any need now, to exhort men to hold fast the profession of Faith, when the danger of drawing back is so evident, and so terrible? or is there any reason and occasion for it? Certainly there is no great danger amongst us, of Mens Apostatizing from Christianity, and turning *Jews*, or *Turks*, or *Heathens*; I do not think there is; but yet for all that, we are not free from the danger of Apostasie; there is great danger, not of Mens Apostatizing from one Religion to another, but from Religion to Infidelity, and

Z 2 Atheism;

Atheism; and of this worst kind of Apostasie of all other, I wish the Age we live in, had not afforded us too many instances. It is greatly to be lamented, that among those who have profest Christianity, any should be found, that should make it their endeavour to undermine the great Principles of all Religion; the Belief of a God, and his Providence; and of the Immortality of the Souls of Men; and a state of Rewards and Punishments after this Life; and to bring the most serious matters in the World into contempt, and to turn them into jest and raillery; this is not only a Renouncing of Christianity, the Religion which God hath revealed, but even of the Religion which is born with us, and the Principles and Notions which God hath planted in every Man's Mind; this is an Impiety of the First Magnitude, and not to be mentioned without grief and horror; and this, it is to be feared, hath had a great hand in those great Calamities which our eyes have seen; and I pray God, it do not draw down still more and greater Judgments upon this Nation: But I hope there are none here that need to be cautioned against
this

this horrible impiety, and highest degree of Apostasie from the living God; that which People are much more in danger of, is Apostasie from the Purity of the Christian Doctrine and Worship, so happily recovered by a regular Reformation, and establisht amongst us, by all the Authority that Laws, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, can give it; and which in Truth is no other than the Ancient and Primitive Christianity; I say, a defection from this, to those gross Errors and Superstitions, which the Reformation had paired off, and freed us from. I do not say, that this is a total Apostasie from Christianity; but it is a partial Apostasie and Defection, and a very dangerous one; and *that those, who after they have received the knowledge of the truth, fall off from it,* into those Errors and Corruptions, are highly guilty before God, and their condition certainly worse, and more dangerous, than of those who were brought up in those Errors and Superstitions, and never knew better; for there are terrible threatnings in Scripture against those, who fall away from the Truth, which they once embraced, and were

convinced of; *If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, &c, and if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

God considers every Man's Advantages and Opportunities of Knowledge, and their Disadvantages likewise, and makes all reasonable Allowances for them; and for Men to continue in the Errors they have been always brought up in; or, which comes much to one, in Errors which they were led into by Principles early infused into them, before they were in any measure competent Judges of those matters; I say, for such Persons to continue in these Errors, and to oppose and reject the contrary Truths, against which, by their Education, they have received so strong and violent a Prejudice, this may be in a great degree excusable, and find Pardon with God, upon a general Repentance for all Sins, both known and unknown; and cannot be reasonably charged with the Guilt of this great Sin of Apostasie. But not to abide in the Truth, after we have entertain'd and profess'd it, having sufficient Means and Advantages of knowing it, hath no Excuse.

I would not be rash in condemning Particular Persons of any Society or Communion of Christians, provided they be sincerely devout, and just, and sober, to the best of their Knowledge: I had much rather leave them to God, *whose mercies are great*, than to pass an uncharitable Censure upon them, as to their Eternal State and Condition: But the Case is far otherwise, where the Opportunities of Knowledge are afforded to Men, and *men love darkness rather than light*; for they who have the Means and Advantages of *knowing their Master's will*, are answerable to God, as if they had known it; because if they had not been grossly negligent, and wanting to themselves, they might have known it.

And this I fear is the Case of the generality of those, who have been bred up to years of Consideration and Choice in the Reformed Religion, and forsake it; because they do it without sufficient Reason, and there are invincible Objections against it: They do it without sufficient Reason; because every one amongst us knows, or may know, upon very little Enquiry, that we hold all the Articles of the Faith, which are contained in the Ancient Creeds of the Christian

stian Church, and into which all Christians are baptized; that we inculcate upon Men the Necessity of a Good Life, and of sincere Repentance, and perfect Contrition for our Sins, such as is follow'd with real Reformation and Amendment of our Lives; and that without this, no Man can be saved by any Device whatsoever.

Now what Reason can any Man have, to question whether he may be saved in that Faith which saved the first Christians, and by believing the Twelve Articles of the Apostles Creed, tho he cannot swallow the Twelve Articles which are added to it in the Creed of Pope *Pius IV.* every one of which, besides many and great Corruptions and Superstitions in Worship, are so many and invincible Objections against the Communion of the *Roman Church*, as I could particularly shew, if it had not been already done, in so many learned Treatises upon this Argument. What is there then, that should move any reasonable Man to forsake the Communion of our Church, and to quit the Reformed Religion?

There

There are Three things chiefly with which they endeavour to amuse and affright weaker Minds.

1. A great Noise of Infallibility, which they tell us, is so excellent a means to determine and put an end to all Differences. To which I shall at present only object this Prejudice; That there are not wider and hotter Differences among us, about any thing whatsoever, than are amongst them about this admirable means of ending all Differences, as, where this Infallibility is seated, that Men may know how to have recourse to it, for the ending of Differences.

2. They endeavour to fright Men with the danger of Schism. But every Man knows, that the Guilt of Schism lies at their Door, who impose sinful Articles of Communion; and not upon them, who for fear of sinning against God, cannot submit to those Articles; which we have done, and are still ready to make good, to be the Case betwixt us and the Church of Rome. But,

3. The terrible Engine of all, is, their positive and confident damning of all that live and die out of the Communion of their Church. This I have fully spoken

ken to upon another Occasion, and therefore shall only say at present, that every Man ought to have better Thoughts of God, than to believe, that he, *who delighteth not in the death of sinners, and would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,* will confirm the Sentence of such uncharitable Men, as take upon them to condemn Men for those things, for which our Saviour in his Gospel condemns no Man. And of all things in the World, one would think, that the Uncharitableness of any Church, should be an Argument to no Man, to run into its Communion.

I shall conclude with the Apostle's Exhortation, *ver. 23. of this Chapter, Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering, and provoke one another to charity and good works; and so much the more, because the Day approacheth, in which God will judge the faith and lives of men, by Jesus Christ, according to his Gospel.*

A
S E R M O N,
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MATTH. XVI. 24.

*Then said Jesus unto his Disciples,
If any man will come after me, let
him deny himself, and take up his
Cross and follow me.*

THEN said Jesus to his Disciples,
That is, upon Occasion of his
former Discourse with them,
wherein he had acquainted them with
his approaching Passion, that he must
shortly go up to Jerusalem, and there
suffer many things of the Elders and Chief
Priests and Scribes, and at last be put to
Death by them; *then said Jesus unto his Dis-
ciples, If any man will come after me, let him
deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow
me.*

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If any man will come after me, or follow me ; that is, If any man will be my Disciple, and undertake the Profession of my Religion ; If any man chuse and resolve to be a Christian ; he must be so upon these Terms ; he must deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me : He must follow me in Self-denial and Suffering.

In the handling of these Words, I shall do these Four things.

I. I shall consider the way and method which our Saviour useth in making Profelytes, and gaining Men over to his Religion : He offers no manner of Force and Violence to compel them to the Profession of his Religion ; but fairly offers it to their Consideration and Choice, and tells them plainly upon what terms they must be his Disciples ; and if they be contented and resolved to submit to these Terms, well ; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer ; *for they cannot be his Disciples.*

II. I shall endeavour to explain this Duty of Self-denial, exprest in these Words, *Let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me.*

III. I

III. I shall consider the strict and indispensable Obligation of it, whenever we are call'd to it, *Without this we cannot be Christ's Disciples; if any man will come after me, or be my Disciple, let him deny himself.*

IV. I shall endeavour to vindicate the reasonableness of this Precept, of self-denial and suffering for Christ, which at first appearance may seem to be so very harsh and difficult; and I shall go over these Particulars as briefly as I can.

I. We will consider the way and method which our Saviour here useth in making Profelytes, and gaining men over to his Religion; he offers no manner of force and violence to compel men to the profession of his Religion, but fairly proposeth it to their Consideration and Choice, telling them plainly upon what terms they must be his Disciples; if they like them, and are content, and resolved to submit to them, well; he is willing to receive them, and own them for his Disciples; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer: For *they cannot*

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be his Disciples. As on the one hand, he offers them no worldly Preferment and Advantage, to entice them into his Religion, and to tempt them outwardly to profess what they do not inwardly believe ; so on the other hand, he does not hale and drag them by force, and awe them by the terrours of torture and death to sign the Christian Faith, tho' most undoubtably true ; and to confess with their mouths, and subscribe with their hands, what they do not believe in their hearts. He did not obtrude his Sacraments upon them, and plunge them into the water to Baptize them, whether they would or no, and thrust the Sacrament of Bread into their mouths ; as if men might be Worthy Receivers of that Blessed Sacrament, whether they receive it willingly or no.

Our Blessed Saviour, the Author and Founder of our Religion, made use of none of these ways of violence, so contrary to the nature of man, and of all Religion, and especially of Christianity, and fitted only to make men Hypocrites, but not Converts ; he only says, *If any man will be my Disciple ;* he useth no Arguments, but such as are
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Spiritual, and proper to work upon the Minds and Consciences of Men: For as his *Kingdom was not of this world*, so neither are the Motives and Arguments to induce Men to be his subjects, taken from this world; but from the endless Rewards and Punishments of another. The weapons which he made use of, to subdue Men to the obedience of Faith, are not *carnal*; and yet they were *mighty through God*, to conquer the obstinacy and infidelity of men. This great and infallible Teacher, who certainly came from God, all that he does, is to propose his Religion to Men, with such Evidence, and such Arguments, as are proper to convince Men of the Truth and Goodness of it; and to persuade Men to embrace it; and he acquaints them likewise with all the worldly Disadvantages of it, and the hazards and sufferings that would attend it; and now, if upon full consideration, they will make his Religion their free Choice, and become his Disciples, he is willing to receive them; if they will not, he understands the nature of Religion better, than to go about to force it upon Men, whether they will or no.

II. I shall

II. I shall endeavour to explain this Duty or Precept of self-denial, expressed in these words, *Let him deny himself, and take up his cross.* These are difficult Terms; for a Man to *deny himself*, and *take up his own Cross*; that is, willingly to submit to all those Sufferings which the malice of Men may inflict for the sake of Christ and his Religion. For this Expression, of *taking up one's Cross*, is a plain Allusion to the Roman Custom, which was this; That he that was condemned to be Crucified, was to take his Cross upon his Shoulders, and to carry it to the place of Execution; this the Jews made our Saviour to do, as we read, *Joh. 19. 17.* till that being ready to faint under it and lest he should die away before he was nailed to the Cross, they compelled *Simon of Cyrene* to carry it for him, as is declar'd by the other Evangelists; and yet he tells them, *they that will be his Disciples must follow him, bearing their own Cross*; that is, being ready (if God call them to it) to submit to the like sufferings for Him and his Truth, which he was shortly to undergo for the Truth, and for their sakes.

But

But tho these terms seem very hard ; yet they are not unreasonable ; as I shall shew in the conclusion of this Discourse: Some indeed have made them so by extending this self-denial too far, attending more to the latitude of the Words, than to the meaning and scope of our Saviour's Discourse: For there is no doubt, but that there are a great many things, which may properly enough be called self-denial, which yet our Saviour never intended to oblige Christians to. It is, no doubt, great self-denial, for a Man, without any Necessity, to deny himself the necessary Supports of Life, for a Man to starve and make away himself. But no Man certainly ever imagined, that our Saviour ever intended by this Precept, to enjoin this kind of self-denial.

It is plain then, that there is no Reason nor Necessity to extend this Precept of our Saviour, concerning self-denial, to every thing that may properly enough be called by that name ; and therefore this Precept must be limited by the plain scope and intendment of our Saviour's Discourse ; and no Man can argue thus ; *such a thing is self-denial, therefore our Saviour requires it of his Disciples* : For our Saviour doth not

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here require all kinds of self-denyal; but limits it, by his Discourse, to one certain kind, beyond which, self-denyal is no Duty by virtue of this Text; and therefore, for our clearer understanding of this Precept of self-denyal, I shall do these two things:

1. Remove some sorts of self-denyal, which are instanced in by some, as intended in this Precept.

2. I shall shew what kind of self-denyal that is, which our Saviour here intends.

1. There are several things brought under this Precept of self-denyal, which were never intended by our Saviour. I shall instance in Two or Three things, which are most frequently insisted upon, and some of them by very devout and well-meaning Men; as, that in matters of Faith, We should deny and renounce our own Senses and our Reason; nay, that we should be content to renounce our own Eternal Happiness, and be willing to be damned for the Glory of God and the Good of our Brethren: But all these are so apparently and grossly unreasonable, that it is a Wonder that any one should ever take them for Instances of that self-denyal which our Saviour requires; especially

cially considering, that in all his Discourse of self-denial, he does not so much as glance at any of these Instances, or any thing like to them.

1. Some comprehend under self-denial, the denying and renouncing our own Senses in matters of Faith: and if this could be made out to be intended by our Saviour in this Precept, we need not dispute any of the other Instances. For he that renounceth the certainty of Sense, so as not to believe what he sees, may after this renounce and deny any thing. For the Evidence of Sense is more clear and unquestionable than that of Faith; as the Scripture frequently intimates; as *John 20. 29.* where our Saviour reproves *Thomas*, for refusing to believe his Resurrection, upon any less Evidence than that of Sense; *Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.* Which plainly supposeth the Evidence of Sense to be the highest and clearest degree of Evidence. So likewise that of *St. Paul, 2 Cor. 5. 7. We walk by Faith, and not by Sight:* Where the Evidence of Faith, as that which is more imperfect and obscure, is opposed to that of Sight, as more clear and cer-

tain. So that to believe any Article of Faith, in contradiction to the clear Evidence of Sense, is contrary to the very Nature of Assent ; which always yields to the greatest and clearest Evidence.

Besides that, our Belief of Religion is *at last* resolved into the certainty of Sense ; so that by renouncing *that*, we destroy and undermine the very Foundation of our Faith. One of the plainest and principal Proofs of the Being of God (which is the first and Fundamental Article of all Religion) relies upon the certainty of Sense ; namely, the Frame of this visible World ; by the Contemplation whereof, we are led to the acknowledgment of the invisible Author of it. So St. Paul tells us, *Rom. 1. 20. That the invisible things of God, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

And the great external Evidence of the Christian Religion, I mean Miracles, is at last resolved into the certainty of Sense, without which, we can have no assurance that any Miracle was wrought for the confirmation of it.

And the knowledge likewise of the
Christian

Christian Faith, is conveyed to us by our Senses; the Evidence whereof, if it be uncertain, takes away all certainty of Faith. *How shall they believe, (saith St. Paul, Rom. 10. 14.) How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not Heard?* And ver. 17. *So then Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* So that to deny and renounce our Senses in matters of Faith, is to take away the main Pillar and Foundation of it.

2. Others, almost with equal absurdity, would comprehend under our Saviour's Precept of Self-denial, the denying and renouncing of our Reason in matters of Faith: and this is Self-denial with a witness, for a Man to deny his own reason; for it is to deny himself to be a Man. This surely is a very great mistake, and tho the ground of it may be innocent; yet the consequence of it, and the Discourses upon it, are very absurd.

The Ground of the mistake is this. Men think they deny their own Reason, when they assent to the Revelation of God in such things, as their own Reason could neither have discovered, nor is able to give the reason of:

whereas in this case, a Man is so far from denying his own Reason, that he does that which is most agreeable to it, For what more reasonable than to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured is revealed to us by God, who can neither be deceived himself, nor deceive us?

But tho' the Ground of this mistake may be innocent, yet the Consequences of it are most absurd and dangerous. For if we are to renounce our Reason in matters of Faith, then are we bound to believe without Reason, which no Man can do; or if he could, then Faith would be unreasonable, and Infidelity reasonable. So that this Instance likewise of Self-denial, to renounce and deny our own Reason, as it is no where exprest, so it cannot reasonably be thought to be intended by our Saviour in this Precept.

3. Nor doth this Precept of Self-denial require Men to be content to renounce their own Eternal Happiness, and to be willing to be Damned for the Glory of God, and the good of their Brethren. If this were the meaning of this Precept, we might justly say, as the Disciples did
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to our Saviour, in another Case, *This is a hard saying, and who can hear it?* The very thought of this, is enough to make Humane Nature to tremble at its very foundation. For the deepest Principle that God hath planted in our Nature, is *the desire of our own Preservation and Happiness*; and into this the Force of all Laws, and the Reason of all our Duty is at last resolved.

From whence it plainly follows, that it can be no Man's Duty in any case to renounce his own Happiness, and to be content to be for Ever Miserable; because if once this be made a Duty, there will be no Argument left, to perswade any Man to it. For the most powerful Arguments, that God ever used, to perswade Men to any thing, are the Promise of Eternal Happiness, and the Terrour of Everlasting Torments: But if this were a Man's Duty, to be content to be Miserable for Ever, neither of these Arguments would be of force sufficient to perswade a Man to it.

The first of these, namely the Promise of Eternal Happiness, could signify nothing to him that is to be Eternally

nally Miserable ; because if he be to be so, it is impossible that he should ever have the benefit of that Promise: and the threatning of Eternal Misery, could be no Argument in this Case ; because the Duty is just as difficult, as the Argument is powerful, and no Man can be moved to submit to any thing that is grievous and terrible, but by something that is more terrible ; for if it be not, it is the same thing, whether he submit to it, or not ; and then no Man can be content, to be Eternally Miserable, only for the fear of being so ; for this would be for a Man to run himself upon that very inconvenience which he is so much afraid of ; and 'tis madness for a Man to die for fear of death. *Quis novus hic furor est, ne moriare, mori?*

By this it plainly appears, how unreasonable it is to imagin, that by this Precept of Self-denial, our Saviour should require Men to renounce Everlasting Happiness, and to be content to be Miserable for Ever, upon any account whatsoever ; because this were to suppose, that God hath imposed that upon us as a Duty, to oblige us where-to there can be no Argument offer'd,
that

that can be powerful enough. As for the Glory of God, which is pretended to be the Reason, it is an impossible Supposition; because it cannot be for the Glory of God, to make a Creature for Ever Miserable, that shall not by his Wilful Obstinacy and Impenitence deserve to be so.

But this is only cast in to add weight. The other Reason of the Good and Salvation of our Brethren, is the only Consideration for which there is any manner of colour from Scripture; and two Instances are alledged to this purpose, of two very Excellent Persons, that seem to have desired this, and to have submitted to it; and therefore it is not so unreasonable as we would make it, that our Saviour should enjoyn it as a Duty. The Instances alledged are these. *Moses* desired of God that he might be blotted out of the Book of Life, rather than the People of *Israel*, whom he had Conducted and Governed so long, should be destroyed: And in the New Testament *St. Paul* tells us, *That he could wish, that himself were accursed from Christ, for his Brethren*; so earnest a desire had he of their Salvation.

But

But neither of these Instances are of force sufficient to overthrow the Reasons of my former Discourse; for the desire of *Moses* amounts only to a submission to a Temporal death, that his Nation might be saved from a Temporal ruin.

For the Expression of *blotting out of the Book of Life*, is of the same importance with those Phrases so frequently used in the Old Testament, of *blotting out from the face of the Earth*, and *blotting out one's name from under Heaven*; which signifie no more than Temporal death and destruction; and then *Moses's* Wish was reasonable and generous, and signifies no more, but that he was willing, if God pleased, to die to save the Nation.

As for *St. Paul's* Wish, of *being accursed from Christ*, it is plainly an Hyperbolical Expression of his great Affection to his Country-men the *Jews*, and his Zeal for their Salvation, which was so great, that if it had been a thing reasonable and lawful, he could have wisht the greatest Evil to himself for their sakes; and therefore it is observable, that it is not a positive and absolute wish, but exprest in the usual form

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of ushering in an Hyperbole; *I could wish*, just as we are wont to say, when we would express a thing to the hight, which is not fit, nor intended to be done by us; *I could wish so or so*; *I could even afford to do this or that*; which kind of speeches, no Man takes for a strict and precise Declaration of our minds, but for a figurative expression of a great Passion.

And thus I have done with the *first thing* I proposed for the Explication of this Precept, or Duty of Self-denial; which was to remove some sorts of Self-denial, which by some are frequently instanced in, as intended by our Saviour in this Precept. I proceed now to the

Second thing I proposed; which is to declare positively, what that Self-denial is, which our Saviour here intends; and 'tis plainly this, and nothing but this; that we should be willing to part with all Earthly Comforts and Conveniences, to quit all our Temporal Interests and Enjoyments, and even Life it self, for the sake of Christ and his Religion. This our Saviour means, by *denying our selves*; and then (which is much the same with the other) that we should be

be willing to bear any Temporal inconvenience and suffering, upon the same account. This is *to take up our Cross and follow him.*

And that this is the full meaning of these two Phrases, *of denying our selves,* and *taking up our Cross,* will clearly appear, by considering the particular Instances, which our Saviour gives of this Self-denial, when ever he hath occasion to speak of it; by which you will plainly see, that these expressions amount to no more than I have said. Even here in the *Text*, after our Saviour had told his Disciples, that *he that would come after him, must deny himself, and take up his Cross;* It follows immediately, *for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.* You see here, that he instanceth in parting with our lives for him, as the highest piece of Self-denial, which he requires. And he himself elsewhere tells us, that *greater love than this hath no man, than that a man lay down his life for his friend.* Elsewhere he instanceth in quitting our nearest Relations for his sake; *Luke 14. 26, 27. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children*

children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my Disciple; and whosoever doth not bear his Cross and come after me, he cannot be my Disciple.

Which expressions, of hating Father, and Mother, and other Relations, and even Life it self, are not to be understood Rigorously, and in an absolute Sense, but Comparatively; for it is an Hebrew manner of speech, to express that Absolutely, which is meant only Comparatively; and so our Saviour explains himself, in a parallel Text to this; Matth. 10. 37, 38. *He that loveth father or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me: he that loveth son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* In another place, our Saviour instanceth in quitting our Estates for his sake, Matth. 19. 29. *Every one that shall forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my names sake; by all which it appears, that this Self-denyal which our Saviour here requires of his Disciples, is to be extended no farther, than to a readiness and willingness, when ever God shall call us*

to it, to quit all our Temporal Interests and Enjoyments, and even Life it self, (the dearest of all other) and to submit to any Temporal inconvenience and suffering for his sake. And thus much for the Explication of the Precept here in the *Text*. I proceed in the

Third Place, to consider the strict and indispensable Obligation of this Precept of Self-denyal, and suffering for Christ, and his Truth, rather than to forsake and renounce them. *If any man will come after me, or be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me;* that is, upon these Terms, he must be my Disciple, in this manner he must follow me; and in the *Text* I mention'd before, he declares again, that he that is not ready to quit all his Relations and even Life it self, for his sake, *is not worthy of him, and cannot be his Disciple;* and *whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my Disciple;* so that we cannot be the Disciples of Christ, nor be worthy to be called by his Name; if we be not ready thus to deny our selves for his sake: And not only so; but if for fear of the Cross, or of any temporal sufferings, we

we should renounce, and deny him ; he threatens *to deny us before his Father which is in Heaven, (i. e.)* to deprive us of Eternal Life, and to Sentence us to Everlasting Misery. *Matth. 10. 32. Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my father which is in Heaven : But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father which is in Heaven : And Mark 8. 38. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels ; that is, when he cometh to Judge the World, they shall not be able to stand in that Judgment ; for that by his being ashamed of them, is meant, that they shall be condemned by him, is plain from what goes before, V. 26, 27. What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul ? and then it follows, Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words.*

But because some have had the Confidence to tell the World, that our Saviour doth not require thus much
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of Christians ; but all that he obligeth us to, is to believe in him in our Hearts, but not to make any outward Profession of his Religion, when the Magistrate forbids it, and we are in danger of suffering for it: I shall therefore briefly examine what is pretended for so strange an Assertion, and so directly contrary to the whole Tenor of the Gospel, and to the exprefs Words of our Saviour.

The Author of the Book called the *Leviathan*, tells us, That we are not only not bound to confess Christ, but we are obliged to deny him, in case the Magistrate require us so to do. His Words are these: *What if the Sovereign forbid us to believe in Christ?* He answers, *Such forbidding is of no effect, because Belief and Unbelief never follows Mens Commands.* But what (says he) if we be commanded by our lawful Prince to say with our Tongues, we believe not ; must we obey such Commands ? To this he answers, *That Profession with the Tongue is but an External thing, and no more than any other Gesture, whereby we signify our Obedience, and where-in a Christian, holding firmly in his Heart the Faith of Christ, hath the same Liberty which the Prophet Elisha allowed to Naaman.* But what then (says he) shall I
answer

answer to our Saviour, saying, Whosoever denieth me before Men, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven. His Answer is, This we may say, that whatsoever a Subject is compell'd to in obedience to his Sovereign, and does it not in order to his own Mind, but the Law of his Country, the Action is not his, but his Sovereign's; nor is it he that in this Case denies Christ before Men, but his Governour, and the Laws of his Country.

But can any Man, that in good earnest pays any degree of Reverence to our Blessed Saviour and his Religion, think to baffle such plain Words by so frivolous an Answer? There is no Man doubts, but if the Magistrate should command Men to deny Christ, he would be guilty of a great Sin in so doing; but if *we must obey God rather than Men*, and every Man must *give an account of himself to God*; how will this excuse him that denies Christ, or breaks any other Commandment of God, upon the Command of the Magistrate? And to put the matter out of all doubt, that our Saviour forbids all that will be his Disciples, upon pain of Damnation, to deny him, tho the Magistrate should com-

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mand them to do so, it is very observable, that in that very place, where he speaks of confessing or denying him before Men, he puts this very Case, of their being brought before Kings and Governours for confessing him, *Matth. 10. 17.* Beware (says he) of Men, for they will deliver you up to the Council, and they will scourge you in their Synagogues; and ye shall be brought before Governours and Kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But what Testimony would this be against them, if Christians were bound to deny Christ at their Command?

But our Saviour goes on, and tells them how they ought to demean themselves, when they were brought before Kings and Governours, *v. 19.* But when they shall deliver you up, take ye no thought, how, or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that very hour what ye shall speak. But what need of any such extraordinary Assistance in the case, if they had nothing to do, but to deny him, when they were required by the Magistrate to do it? And then (proceeding in the same Discourse) he bids them, *v. 28.* Not to fear them that can kill the Body,
and

and after that have no more that they can do; that is, not to deny him, for fear of any Temporal Punishment or Suffering the Magistrate could inflict upon them; but to fear and obey him, who can destroy Body and Soul in Hell. And upon this Discourse our Saviour concludes, v. 32, 33. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* And now can any thing be plainer, than that our Saviour requires his Disciples to make Confession of him before Kings and Governours, and not to deny him for fear of any thing which they can do to them? But let us enquire a little farther, and see how the Apostles, who received this Precept from our Saviour himself, did understand it. *Acts 4. 14.* we find Peter and John summoned before the Jewish Magistrates, who strictly commanded them, not to speak at all, nor teach in the Name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, *Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.* And when they still persisted in their

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course,

course, notwithstanding the Command of the Magistrate, and were called again before the Council, Ch. 5. 28. *And the High Priest asked them, saying, Did we not straitly command you, that you should not teach in this Name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your Doctrine:* They return them again the same Answer, v. 29. *Then Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

And let any Man now judge, whether our Saviour did not oblige Men to confess him even before Magistrates, and to obey him rather than Men. And indeed, how can any Man in reason think, that the great King and Governour of the World should invest any Man with a Power to control his Authority, and to oblige Men to disobey and renounce him, *by whom Kings reign, and Princes decree judgment?* This is a thing so unreasonable, that it can hardly be imagined, that any thing but down-right Malice against God and Religion could prompt any Man to advance such an Assertion.

I should now have proceeded to the *Fourth* and *Last* Particular, which I proposed

proposed to speak to ; namely, To vindicate the reasonableness of this Precept of Self-denial and Suffering for Christ, which at first Appearance may seem to be so very harsh and difficult. But this, together with the Application of this Discourse, shall be reserved to another Opportunity.

The Thirteenth Sermon

Proposed to be read to the
the members of the
of the Church of
the City of
the County of
the State of
the United States
the 13th of
the month of
the year 18

A
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MATTH. XVI. 24.

*Then said Jesus unto his Disciples,
If any man will come after me, let
him deny himself, and take up his
Cross and follow me.*

THEN said Jesus unto his Disciples;
that is, upon Occasion of his
former Discourse with them,
concerning his approaching Passion, and
that he must shortly go up to *Jerusalem*,
and there suffer many things of the El-
ders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and at
last be put to Death by them; *Then said
Jesus unto his Disciples, If any man will come
after me; that is, If any Man will be*

my Disciple, and undertake the Profession of my Religion, he must do it upon these Terms of Self-denial and Suffering.

In the handling of these Words, I proceeded in this Method.

First, I considered the way which our Saviour here useth in making Profelytes, and gaining Men over to his Religion. He offers no manner of Force and Violence to compel Men to the Profession of it, but fairly proposeth it to their Consideration and Choice ; telling them plainly upon what Terms they must be his Disciples ; if they like them, and be resolved to submit to them, well ; if not, 'tis in vain to follow him any longer ; *for they cannot be his Disciples*. And to use any other way than this to gain Men over to Religion, is contrary both to the Nature of Man, who is a Reasonable Creature ; and to the Nature of Religion, which, if it be not our Free Choice, cannot be Religion.

Secondly, I explained this Duty or Precept of Self-denial, exprest'd in these Words, *Let him deny himself, and take up his Cross* ; which Phrase, *of taking up one's Cross*, is an Allusion to the Roman Custom, which was, That the Malefactor

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that was to be Crucified, was to take up his Cross upon his Shoulders, and to carry it to the Place of Execution.

Now for our clearer understanding of this Precept of Self-denial, I told you, that it is not to be extended to every thing that may properly be call'd by that Name, but to be limited by the plain Scope and Intendment of our Saviour's Discourse; and therefore I did in the

First Place remove several things which are instanced in by some, as intended and required by this Precept. As,

1. That we should deny and renounce our own Sense in matters of Faith. But this I shewed to be absurd and impossible; because if we do not believe what we see, or will believe contrary to what we see, we destroy all Certainty, there being no greater than that of Sense: Besides, that the Evidence of Faith being less clear and certain than that of Sense, it is contrary to the Nature of Assent, which is always sway'd and born down by the greatest and clearest Evidence. So that we cannot assent to any thing in plain Contradiction to the Evidence of Sense.

2. Others

2. Others would comprehend under this Precept, the denying of our Reason in matters of Faith ; which is in the next degree of Absurdity to the other ; because no Man can believe any thing, but upon some Reason or other ; and to believe without any Reason, or against Reason, is to make Faith unreasonable, and Infidelity reasonable.

3. Others pretend, that by virtue of this Precept, Men ought to be content to renounce their own Eternal Happiness, and to be Miserable for Ever, for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of their Brethren. But this I shewed cannot be a Duty, for this plain Reason ; because if it were, there is no Argument left powerful enough to perswade a Man to it. And as for the two Scripture Instances alledged to this purpose ; *Moses* his Wish, of being *blotted out of the Book of Life* for the People of *Israel*, signifies no more than a Temporal Death ; and *St. Paul's*, of being *accursed from Christ for his Brethren*, is only an hyperbolical Expression of his great Passion and Zeal for the Salvation of his Country-men ; as is evident from the Form of the Expression ; such as is commonly used to usher in an Hyperbole ; *I could wish*. And in the

Second

Second Place, I shewed positively, That the plain meaning of this Precept of Self-denial is this, and nothing but this; That we should be willing to part with all our Temporal Interests and Enjoyments, and even Life it self, for the sake of Christ and his Religion. This is *to deny our selves*. And then, that we should be willing to bear any temporal Inconvenience and Suffering upon the same Account. This is *to take up our Cross*. And this I shewed from the Instances which our Saviour gives of Self-denial, whenever he had occasion to discourse of it.

Thirdly, I considered the strict and indispensable Obligation of this Precept of Self-denial, rather than to forsake Christ and his Religion. Without this Disposition and Resolution of Mind we cannot be his Disciples; *And if we deny him before Men; he will also deny us before his Father which is in Heaven*. And this Confession of Him and his Truth we are to make before Kings and Governours, and notwithstanding their Commands to the contrary, which are of no Force against the Laws and Commands of God.

Thus far I have gone. There remains only the

IV. And

IV. And *Last* Particular, which I proposed to speak to; *viz.* To vindicate the Reasonableness of this Self-denial and Suffering for Christ, which at first appearance may seem to be so very difficult. And this Precept cannot be thought unreasonable, if we take into Consideration these *Three* Things.

I. That He who requires this of us, hath Himself given us the greatest Example of Self-denial that ever was. The greatest in it self, in that he denied himself more, and suffered more grievous things, than it is possible for any of us to do: And such an Example, as in the Circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; because all his Self-denial and Sufferings were for our sakes.

II. If we consider, That he hath promised all needful Supplies of his Grace, to enable us to the Discharge of this difficult Duty of Self-denial and Suffering, and to support and comfort us therein.

III. He hath assured us of a Glorious Reward of all our Sufferings and Self-denial, beyond the Proportion of them, both in the Degree and Duration of it. I shall go over these as briefly as I can.

I. If

I. If we consider, That He who requires us thus to deny our selves for him, hath given us the greatest Example of Self-denial that ever was. Our Saviour knowing how unwelcome this Doctrine of Self-denial and Suffering must needs be to his Disciples, and how hardly this Precept would go down with them; to sweeten it a little, and take off the harshness of it, and to prepare their Minds the better for it, he tells them first of his own Sufferings; that by that means he might, in some measure, reconcile their Minds to it, when they saw that he required nothing of them, but what he was ready to undergo Himself, and to give them the Example of it. And upon this Occasion it was, that our Saviour acquaints them with the hard and difficult Terms upon which they must be his Disciples. *V. 21.* The Evangelist tells us, that *Jesus began to shew unto his Disciples; how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders, and Chief-Priests, and Scribes, and be killed. Then said Jesus unto his Disciples; that is, immediately upon this Discourse of his own Sufferings, as the fittest time for it, he takes the Opportunity to tell them*
plainly

plainly of their own Sufferings ; and that unless they were prepared and resolved to deny themselves so far, as to suffer all manner of Persecution for his sake and the Profession of his Religion ; they could not be his Disciples. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me* ; that is, let him reckon and resolve upon following that Example of Self-denial and Suffering, in which I will go before him. Now the Consideration of this Example of Self-denial and Suffering, which our Saviour hath given us, hath great force in it to reconcile us to this difficult Duty, and to shew the Reasonableness of it.

1. That He who requires us thus to deny our selves, hath Himself in his own Person, given us the greatest Example of self-denial that ever was. And,

2. Such an Example, as, in all the Circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it ; because all his Self-denial and Sufferings were for our sakes.

1. He who requires us thus to deny our selves, hath Himself in his own Person given us the greatest Example of Self-

Self-denial that ever was; in that he denied himself more, and suffered more grievous things, than any of us can do. He bore the insupportable Load of all the Sins of all Mankind, and of the Wrath and Vengeance due to them. *Never was sorrow like to his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; his visage was marred more than any mans, and his form more than the sons of men.* (i. e.) He underwent more Affliction, and had more Contempt poured upon him, than ever was upon any of the Sons of Men; and yet he endured all this with incredible Patience and Meekness, with the greatest Evenness and Constancy of Mind, and with the most perfect Submission and Resignation of himself to the Will of God, that can be imagined.

Such an Example as this should be of great force to animate us with the like Courage and Resolution, in lesser Dangers and Difficulties. To see the *Captain of our Salvation* going before us, and leading us on so bravely, *and made perfect by greater sufferings* than we can ever be called to, or are any ways able

to undergo, is no small Argument and Encouragement to us, to *take up our Cross and follow him*. The Consideration of the unknown Sufferings of the Son of God, so great as we cannot well conceive of them, should make all the Afflictions and Sufferings that can befall us, not only tolerable, but easie to us. Upon this Consideration it is, that the Apostle animates Christians to Patience in their Christian Course; notwithstanding all the Hardships and Sufferings that attended it; *Heb. 12. 2. Let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who endured the Cross, and despised the Shame. For consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye also be weary and faint in your minds.*

And this Example is more Powerful for our Encouragement; because therein we see the World conquered to our Hands, and all the Terrours and Temptations of it baffled and subdued, and thereby a cheap and easie Victory over it obtained for us. By this Consideration, our Saviour endeavours to inspire his Disciples with Chearfulness and Courage in this great Conflict;

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John 16. 33. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good chear, I have overcome the world.

2. This Example of our Saviour, is such, as in all the Circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the Imitation of it; because all his Self-denyal and Sufferings were for our sakes, in Pity and Kindness to us, and wholly for our Benefit and Advantage. We are apt to have their Example in great regard, from whom we have received great Kindness and mighty Benefits. This Pattern of Self-denyal and Suffering, which our Religion proposeth to us, is the Example of One, whom we have Reason to Esteem, and Love, and Imitate, above any Person in the World. 'Tis the Example of our Lord and Master, of our Sovereign and our Saviour, of the Founder of our Religion, and of *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*: And surely such an Example must needs carry Authority with it, and command our Imitation. 'Tis the Example of our best Friend, and greatest Benefactor; of Him, who laid down his Life for us, and sealed his Love to us with his dearest Blood; and, even when we were bitter Enemies to

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him, did, and suffered more for us, than any Man ever did for his best Friend. If we should be reduced to Poverty and Want, let us consider Him; *Who being Lord of all, had not where to lay his head; who being rich, for our sakes became poor; that we through his poverty might be made rich.* If it should be our lot to be persecuted for righteousness sake, and exercised with Sufferings and Reproaches; *Let us look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who endured the Cross, and despised the shame for our sakes.* In a Word, can we be discontented at any Condition, or decline it in a good Cause; when we consider how Contented the Son of God was, in the meanest and most destitute; how Meek and Patient in the most afflicted and suffering Condition; how he welcomed all Events, and was so perfectly resigned to the Will of his Heavenly Father, that whatever pleased God, pleased him?

And surely in no Case is Example more necessary than in this, to engage and encourage us in the discharge of so difficult a Duty, so contrary to the bent and inclination of Flesh and Blood. A bare Precept of Self-denial, and a peremptory

empty Command to sacrifice our own Wills, our Ease, our Pleasure, our Reputation, yea and Life it self, to the Glory of God, and the Maintenance of his Truth, would have sounded very harsh and severe; had not the Practice of all this been mollified and sweetned by a Pattern of so much advantage; by One who in all these respects denied himself, much more than it is possible for us to do; by One who might have insisted upon a greater Right; who abased himself, and stooped from a greater Hight and Dignity; who was not forced into a condition of Meanness and Poverty, but chose it for our sakes; who submitted to Suffering; tho he had never deserved it. Here is an Example that hath all the Argument, and all the Encouragement that can be, to the imitation of it.

Such an Example is of greater force and authority than any Precept or Law can be: So that well might our Lord, thus going before us, command us to follow him, and say, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me.* For if He thus denied himself, well may We, who have much less to deny, but much

more Cause and Reason to do it. He did it voluntarily, and of choice; but it is our Duty. He did it for our sakes; we do it for our own. His own Goodness moved him to deny himself for us; but Gratitude obligeth us to deny our selves in any thing for him. We did not in the least deserve any thing from him; but he hath wholly merited all this, and infinitely more from us. So that such an Example as this is, in all the Circumstances of it, cannot but be very powerful and effectual, to oblige us to the Imitation of it. But the Reasonableness of this Precept will yet farther appear, if we consider in the

Third place, That God hath promised to all Sincere Christians all needful Supplies of his Grace, to inable them to the discharge of this difficult Duty of Self-denial, and to support and comfort them therein. For the Spirit of Christ dwells in all Christians, and the same Glorious Power that raised up Jesus from the Dead, works mightily in them that believe; *Eph. 1.19. That ye may know* (saith St. Paul, speaking in general to all Christians) *what is the exceeding greatness of his Power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his mighty*

mighty Power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. Of our selves we are very weak, and the Temptations and Terrors of the world very powerful; but there is a Principle residing in every true Christian, able to bear us up against the World, and the power of all its Temptations. Whatsoever is born of God (saith St. John) overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

And this Grace and Strength was afforded to the first Christians in a most Extraordinary manner, for their Comfort and Support under Sufferings: So that they were *strengthened with all Might, according to God's glorious Power, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness*; as St. Paul prays for the *Colossians*, Ch. I. II. And these Consolations of the Spirit of God, this Joy in the Holy Ghost, was not peculiarly appropriated to the first times of Christianity; but is still afforded to all sincere Christians, in such degree as is necessary, and convenient for them. And whenever God exerciseth Good Men, with tryals more than

humane, and such Sufferings as are beyond the ordinary rate of humane Strength and Patience to bear, he hath promised to endue them with more than humane Courage and Resolution. So St. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. 10. 13. *He is faithful that hath promised, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* And why should we be daunted at any Suffering; if God be pleased to increase our Strength, in proportion to the Sharpness of our Sufferings?

And Blessed be God, many of our persecuted Brethren at this day have remarkably found this comfortable Assistance and Support; tho many likewise have fallen through fear and weakness; as it also hapen'd in the Primitive times. But where ever this Promise is not made good, it is (as I have formerly said) by reason of some Fault and Failing on our part. Either Men were not Sincere in the profession of the Truth, and then no wonder, *If when Tribulation and Persecution ariseth, because of the Word, they are offended and fall off:* Or else they were too Confident of themselves,

selves, and did not seek God's Grace and Assistance, and rely upon it as they ought; and thereupon God hath left them to themselves (as he did *Peter*) to convince them of their own Frailty and rash Confidence; and yet even in that case, when there is Truth and Sincerity at the bottom, there is no Reason to doubt, but that the Goodness of God is such, as by some means or other to give to such persons (as he did to *Peter*) the opportunity of recovering themselves by Repentance, and a more stedfast Resolution afterwards.

4. If we consider, in the *last* place, that our Saviour hath assured us of a Glorious and Eternal Reward of all our Self-denial and Sufferings for him; a Reward Infinitely beyond the proportion of our Sufferings, both in the Degree and Duration of it. Now the clear discovery of this is peculiarly owing to the Christian Religion, and the appearance of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel.*

And as our Blessed Saviour hath assured us of this Blessed State of Good

Men in another World; so hath he likewise assur'd us, that greater Degrees of this Happiness shall be the Portion of Those who suffer for Him and his Truth: *Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12. Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely, for my Names sake. Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.* And nothing surely can be more Reasonable, than to part with things of Small Value, for things infinitely Greater and more Considerable; to forego the Transient Pleasures and Enjoyments, and the Imperfect Felicities of this World, for the Solid, and Perfect, and Perpetual Happiness of a Better Life; and to exchange a Short and Miserable Life, for Eternal Life and Blessedness; in a word, to be content to be driven Home; to be banisht out of this World into our own Native Country; and to be violently thrust out of this *Vale of Tears, into those Regions of Bliss, where are Joys unspeakable and full of Glory.*

This Consideration St. Paul tells us supported the Primitive Christians, under

der their sharpest and heaviest Sufferings, 2 Cor. 4. 16. *For this cause* (says he) *we faint not, because our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* So that our Sufferings bear no more Proportion to the Reward of them, than Finite does to Infinite, than Temporal to Eternal; between which there is no Proportion.

All that now remains, is to draw some useful Inferences from what hath been Discoursed, concerning this great and difficult Duty of Self-denial for the sake of Christ and his Religion; and they shall be these following.

I. To acknowledg the great Goodness of God to us, that all these Laws and Commands, even the Hardest and Severest of them, are so reasonable.

God as he is our Maker, and gave us our Beings, hath an Entire and Sovereign Right over us; and by virtue of that Right, might have imposed very Hard things upon us, and this without the giving

giving Account to us of any of his matters, and without propounding any Reward to us, so vastly disproportionable to our Obedience to him. But in giving Laws to us, he hath not made use of this Right. The most Severe and Rigorous Commands of the Gospel are such, that we shall be infinitely Gainers by our Obedience to them. If we deny our selves any thing in this World for Christ and his Religion, we shall, in the next, be considered for it to the Utmost; not only far beyond what it can Deserve, but beyond what we can Conceive or Imagine: For this perishing Life, and the transitory Trifles and Enjoyments of it, we shall, receive *a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, an uncorruptible Crown which fadeth not away, Eternal in the Heavens.* For these are Faithful Sayings, and we shall Infallibly find them true; *That, if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him; if we be persecuted for righteousness sake, great shall be our reward in Heaven; if we part with our Temporal Life, we shall be made Partakers of Eternal Life.* He that is firmly persuaded of the Happiness of the next World, and believes the Glory which shall then be revealed, hath no Reason

Reason to be so much offended at the Sufferings of this Present time; so long as he knows and believes, *that these Light afflictions which are but for a Moment, will work for him a for more Exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory.*

2. Seeing this is required of every Christian, to be always in a Preparation and Disposition of Mind to deny our selves, and to take up our Cross; if we do in good earnest resolve to be Christians, we ought to sit down and consider well with our selves, what our Religion will cost us, and whether we be content to come up to the Price of it. If we value any thing in this World, above Christ and his Truth, *we are not worthy of him.* If it come to this, that we must either renounce Him and his Religion, or quit our temporal Interests; if we be not ready to forego these, nay, and to part even with Life it self, rather than to forsake Him and his Truth; *we are not worthy of him.* These are the Terms of our Christianity, and therefore we are required in Baptism solemnly to renounce the World: And our Saviour, from this very Consideration, infers, That all who take upon them the Profession of his Religion, should consider

consider seriously beforehand, and count the cost of it; *Luke 14. 28. Which of you, (says he) intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Or what King going to war with another King, doth not sit down and consult, whether with 10000 he be able to meet him that cometh against him with 20000. So likewise, whosoever he be that forsaketh not all he hath, cannot be my Disciple.* You see the Terms upon which we are Christians; we must always be prepared in the Resolution of our Minds, to deny our selves, and take up our Cross, tho we are not Actually put upon this Tryal.

3. What hath been said, is matter of great Comfort and Encouragement to all those who deny themselves, and suffer upon so good an Account; of whom, God knows, there are too great a Number at this Day, in several parts of the World: Some under actual Sufferings, such as cannot but move Compassion and Horror in all that hear of them: Others, who are fled hither, and into other Countries, for Refuge and Shelter from one of the sharpest Persecutions that perhaps ever was, if all the Circumstances

stances of it be duly considered. But not to enlarge upon so unpleasant a Theam, they who suffer for the Truth and Righteousness sake, have all the Comfort and Encouragement, that the best Example, and the greatest and most glorious Promises of God can give. They have the best Example in their view; *Jesus the Author and Finisher of their Faith, who endured the Cross, and despised the Shame.* So that how great and terrible soever their Sufferings be, they do but tread in the Steps of the Son of God, and of the best and holiest Man that ever was; and He who is their great Example in Suffering, will likewise be their Support, *and their exceeding great Reward.*

So that tho Suffering for Christ be accounted great Self-denial, and he is graciously pleased so to accept it; because in denying things Present and Sensible, for things Future and Invisible, we do not only declare our Affection to him, but our great Faith and Confidence in him, by shewing that we rely upon his Word, and venture all upon the Security which he offers us in another World; yet according to a right Estimate of things, and to those who
walk

walk by Faith and not by Sight, this which we call Self-denyal, is, in truth and reality, but a more commendable sort of Self-love ; because we do herein most effectually consult, and secure, and advance our own Happiness.

4. And *Lastly*, Since God hath been pleased for so long a time to excuse us from this hardest part of Self-denyal, let us not grudge to deny our selves in lesser Matters, for the sake of his Truth and Religion ; to miss a good Place, or to quit it upon that account ; much less let us think much to renounce our Vices, and to thwart our evil Inclinations for his sake. As *Naaman's* Servant said to him, concerning the means prescribed by the Prophet for his Cure ; *If he had bid thee do some Great thing, wouldest thou not have done it ? How much more, when he hath only said, Wash and be clean :* So since God imposeth no harder Terms upon us, than Repentance and Reformation of our Lives, we should gladly and thankfully submit to them. This, I know, is difficult to some, to *mortifie their earthly Members*, to *crucifie the flesh, with the affections and lusts of it* ; 'tis like *cutting off a right Hand, and plucking out a right Eye*.

Some

Some are so strongly addicted to their Lusts and Vices, that they could with more ease despise Life, in many cases, than thus Deny themselves: But in Truth, there is no more of Self-denyal in it, than a Man denies himself when he is mortally Sick and Wounded, in being content to be Cured, and willing to be Well. This is not at all to our Temporal Prejudice and Inconvenience, and it directly conduceth to our Eternal Happines; for there is no Man that lives a holy and virtuous Life, and in Obedience to the Laws of God, that can lightly receive any Prejudice by it in this World. Since God doth not call us to Suffer, we should Do so much the more for him. Since he doth not put us to testifie our Love to him, by laying down our Lives for him, we should shew it by a greater Care to keep his Commandments.

God was pleased to exercise the first Christians with great Sufferings, and to try their Love and Constancy to him and his Truth, in a very Extraordinary manner; by Severity and Contempt, by *the spoiling of their Goods, and the loss of all things; by bonds and imprisonments; by cruel mockings and scourgings;*
by

by the extremity of torments, and by resisting even unto blood ; by being kill'd for his sake all the day long, and appointed as Sheep for the slaughter. God was pleased to make their way to Heaven very sharp and painful, and to hedge it in as it were with thorns on every side ; so that they could not, but through many tribulations, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thus we ought all to be in a Readiness and Resolution to submit to this Duty, if God should think fit at any time of our Lives to call us to it. But if he be pleased to excuse us from it, and to let this Cup pass from us, (which may lawfully be our earnest Prayer to God, since we have so good a Pattern for it) there will be another Duty incumbent upon us, which will take up the whole Man, and the whole time of our Life, and that is to *serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.*

A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED

At Whitehall, before the Family,
Nov. 1. 1686.

H E B. XI. 13.

*And confessed that they were Strangers
and Pilgrims on the Earth.*

The whole Verse runs thus:

These all died in Faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth.

THE Apostle having declared at the latter end of the foregoing Chapter, that Faith is the great Principle whereby Good Men are acted;
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and whereby they are supported under all the Evils and Sufferings of this Life, Verse 38. *Now the Just shall live by Faith*; In this Chapter he makes it his main business, to set forth to us at large the Force and Power of Faith; and to this Purpose, he first tells us what kind of Faith he means; *viz.* a firm Persuasion of things not Present and Visible to Sense, but Invisible and Future; Ver. 1. *Now Faith* (saith he) *is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* Faith represents to us the Reality of things which are Invisible to Sense, as the Existence of God and his Providence; and of things which are at a great distance from us, as the Future State of Rewards and Punishments in another World.

And then he proceeds to shew, by particular and famous Instances, that the firm Belief and Persuasion of these things, was the great Principle of the Piety and Virtue of the Saints and Good Men in all Ages of the World; by this *Abel*, and *Enoch*, and *Noah*; *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*; *Joseph* and *Moses*, and all the Famous Heroes of the Old Testament obtained a
good

good Report, and pleased God, and did all those eminent Acts of Obedience and Self-denyal which are recorded of them. They believed the Being of God, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. They dreaded his Threatning, and relyed upon his Promises of Future and Invisible Good things. They lived and died in a full Persuasion and Confidence of the Truth of them; tho they did not live to see them actually fulfilled and accomplisht. *All these* (saith he, speaking of those Eminent Saints which he had instanced in before) *All these died in Faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.* This is spoken with a more particular regard to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; to whom the Promises of the Conquest and Possession of a Fruitful Land were made, and of a Numerous Offspring; among whom should be the Messias, in whom all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed.

These Promises they did not live to see accomplisht and made good in their Days; but they heartily believed them, and rejoiced in the Hope and Expectation of them, as if they had embraced

them in their Arms, and been put into the actual Possession of them: *And they confessed, that they were Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth.*

This Saying and Acknowledgment more particularly and immediately refers to those Sayings of the Patriarchs *Abraham* and *Jacob*, which we find recorded, *Gen. 23. 4.* where *Abraham* says to the Sons of *Heth*, *I am a Stranger and a Sojourner with you*; And *Gen. 47. 9.* where *Jacob* says to *Pharaoh*, *The days of the years of my Pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my Life been.* These Good Men were Strangers and Sojourners in a Land, which was promised to be theirs afterwards. They dwelt in it themselves as Strangers, but were in expectation that it would one day become the Inheritance of their Posterity.

Now in this, as by a Type and Shadow, the Apostle represents to us the Condition of Good Men, while they are passing through this World. They are Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth; they travel up and down the World for a time, as the Patriarchs did in the
Land

Land of *Canaan* ; but are in expectation of a better and more settled Condition hereafter ; *they desire a better Country, that is, an Heavenly*, says the Apostle at the 16 *vers.* of this Chapter.

That which I design from these words, is to represent to us our Present Condition in this World ; and to awaken us to a due Sense and serious Consideration of it. It is the same Condition, that all the Saints and Holy Men that are gone before us were in, in this World ; and every one of us may say with *David*, *Psal. 39. 12. I am a Stranger with thee, and a Sojourner, as all my Fathers were.* It is a Condition very troublesome and very unsettled, such as that of Pilgrims and Strangers useth to be. This we must all acknowledge, if we judge rightly of our present State and Condition. *They confessed, that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth* ; but yet it was not without the Hope and Expectation of a better and happier Condition in Reversion. So it follows just after ; *They that say such things, (that is, that confess themselves to be Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth) declare plainly,*

that they seek a Country. This bore up the Patriarchs under all the Evils and Troubles of their Pilgrimage; that they expected an Inheritance, and a quiet and settled Possession of that Good Land which God had promised to them. Answerably to which, Good Men do expect, after *the few and evil days of their Pilgrimage* in this World are over, a Blessed Inheritance in *a better Country; that is, an Heavenly;* and with blessed *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, *They look for a City which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God;* as it is said of that Good Patriarch at the tenth Verse of this Chapter.

It is very frequent, not only in Scripture, but in other Authors, to represent our Condition in this World, by that of Pilgrims, and Sojourners in a foreign Country: For the Mind which is the Man, and our Immortal Souls, which are by far the most Noble and Excellent part of our selves, are the Natives of Heaven, and but *Pilgrims and Strangers here in the Earth;* and when the days of our Pilgrimage shall be over, are designed to return to that
Heavenly

Heavenly Country from which they came, and to which they belong. And therefore the Apostle tells us, *Phil. 3. 20.* that Christians have relation to Heaven, as their Native place and Country. Ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, *Our conversation is in Heaven*, so we render the words; but they properly signify, that Christians are Members of that City and Society which is above; and tho they converse at present here below, while they are passing through this World, yet Heaven is the Country to which they do belong, and whither they are continually tending; *Sedes ubi fata quietas ostendunt*, where a quiet Habitation, and a perpetual Rest, is designed and prepared for them. This acknowledgment *David* makes concerning himself, and all the People of God, *1 Chron. 29. 15.* For we are Strangers before thee, and Sojourners, as were all our Fathers. Our Days on the Earth are as a Shadow, and there is none abiding. So likewise *St. Peter*, *1 Pet. 1. 17.* Pass the time of your Sojourning here in fear; And *Chap. 2. v. 11.* Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims abstain from fleshly Lusts.

And not only the inspired Writers of Holy Scripture, but Heathen Authors, do frequently make use of this Allusion. *Plato* tells us, it was a common saying, and almost in every Man's Mouth, *κατεπιδημία τις ἐστὶν ὁ βίος*, the Life of Man is a kind of Pilgrimage. And *Tully*, in his Excellent Discourse *de Senectute*, (concerning Old Age) brings in *Cato* describing our passage out of this World, not as a departure from our Home, but like a Man leaving his Inn, in which he hath Lodged for a Night or two, *ex vitâ istâ discedo, tanquam ex hospitio, non tanquam ex domo, commorandi enim natura Diversorium nobis non habitandi dedit*: When I leave this World (says he) I look upon myself as departing out of an Inn, and not as quitting mine own Home and Habitation; Nature having assigned this World to us as a place to Sojourn, but not to Dwell in. Which is the same with what the Apostle says in the Text, concerning the Patriarchs, they confessed that they were Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth; and concerning all Christians, Chap. 13. 14.
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Here we have no continuing City, but we seek one to come.

But I do not intend to follow the Metaphor too close, and to vex and torture it, by pursuing all those little Parallels and Similitudes, which a Lively Fancy might make or find, betwixt the Condition of Strangers and Pilgrims, and the Life of Man during his Abode and Passage through this World. I will insist only upon Two things, which seem plainly to be design'd and intended by this Metaphor; and they are these:

1. That our Condition in this World is very troublefom and unsettled: *They confessed, that they were Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth.*

2. It implies a tendency to a Future Settling, and the Hopes and Expectation of a happier Condition, into which we shall enter when we go out of this World. For so it follows in the very next Words after the Text; *They confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth; For they that say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a Country. They that say such things; that is, they that acknowledge themselves to*
have

have lived in such a restless and uncertain Condition in this World, travelling from one place to another, as the Patriarchs *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* did, and yet pretend to be perswaded of the Goodness of God, and the Faithfulness of his Promise, in which he solemnly declared himself to be their God, do hereby plainly shew, that they expect some happier Condition hereafter, wherein that great Promise of God will be made good to them to the full.

And these are two very weighty and useful Considerations; That we should both understand our present Condition in this World, and our future Hope and Expectation after our departure out of it, that so we may demean our selves suitably to both these Conditions; both as it is fit for those who look upon themselves as *Pilgrims and Sojourners* in this World, and likewise, as it becomes those who seek and expect a better Country, and hope to be made Partakers of a blessed Immortality in another World. I shall briefly speak to both these; and then shew what Effect and Influence the serious Meditation of these Two Points ought to have upon every one of us.

1. That

1. That our Condition in this World is very troublesom and unsettled. This I take to be principally intended in the Metaphor of Strangers and Pilgrims. Such was the Life of the Patriarchs, which is here spoken of in the Text ; they had no constant Abode and fixt Habitation, but were continually wandering from one Kingdom and Country to another ; in which Travels they were exposed to a great many Hazards and Dangers, Afflictions and Miseries, Affronts and Injuries, as we read at large in the History of their Travels in the Old Testament. And such is our Condition in this World ; it is often troublesom, and always uncertain and unsettled.

'Tis often very troublesom. Not to insist upon the weak Condition of Infancy and Childhood, the helplessness of that State, and insufficiency of it for its own Preservation, and the Supply of its natural Wants and Necessities: Not to mention the dangerous Vanity and desperate Folly of Youth, nor the Infirmities and Contempts, the many tedious and wearisom Days and Nights that Old Age is commonly grieved and afflicted withal,

withal, to that degree, as to make Life not only unpleasant, but almost an intolerable Burden to us.

Not to dwell upon these, which yet take up and possess a great Share and Portion of our Lives: If we look upon Man in his best State, we shall find him, as *David* hath long since pronounced on him, to be *altogether Vanity*. We need not go a Pilgrimage, and travel into remote Countries, to make Life more troublesome and uneasie. In what part of the World soever we are (even that which we improperly call our own Home and Native Country) we shall meet with Trouble and Inconvenience enough to convince us, that we are but *Strangers* in it. More especially good Men are peculiarly liable to a great many Evils and Sufferings upon account of their Piety and Virtue. *They are not of the World* (as our Blessed Saviour tells his Disciples, *John 15. 19.*) and *because they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them*, and taketh all opportunities and occasions to vex and persecute them in one kind or other; either by doing all manner of Evil to them, or by speaking all manner of Evil of them.

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But suppose we escape Trouble upon this account; there are abundance of common and natural Inconveniencies, which render Human Life very uneasy. For either we must live alone, or in the Company and Society of others: One of these two is necessary and unavoidable. Suppose we would live alone; How few are there that can enjoy themselves tolerably alone for any considerable time? For though there be a great deal too much of Self-love in Mankind, and Men are generally extremely fond of themselves; yet I know not how it happens, (tho so it is) that very few Men in the World care for their own Company, or can endure, for any considerable time, to converse only with themselves; nay, for the most part, they are sooner glutted with themselves, and surfeited of their own Conversation, than of the worst Company they can meet with; a shrewd Sign, as one would think, that they know something worse by themselves than of any body else, or at least they know it more certainly. It is a wise and deep Saying of *Aristotle*, whoever affects to be alone, must be ἢ Θεός, ἢ Θηρίον, either a God or a Wild Beast;

Beast ; either he must be sufficient for himself, and want nothing ; or of so wild and savage a Disposition, as to destroy every thing that is weaker, and to run away from every thing that is stronger than himself. Now Man is neither good enough to be contented and satisfied with himself, nor bad enough to hate and avoid every body else ; and therefore he must enter into Society, and keep Company with other Men.

And if we go abroad into the World, and try the Conversation of Men, it cannot but grieve us to see a great many things, which yet we must see every Day ; the Censoriousness, and Uncharitableness, and Insincerity of Men one towards another ; to see with what Kindness they will treat one another to the Face, and how hardly they will use them behind their Backs. If there were nothing else, this one naughty Quality, so common and reigning among Mankind, were enough to make an honest and true-hearted Man, one that loves Plainness and Sincerity, to be heartily sick of the World, and glad to steal off the Stage ; where there is nothing native and sincere, but all personated

nated and acted; where the Conversation of a great part of Men is all designing and insidious, full of Flattery and Falshood, of good Words and ill Offices: *One speaketh peaceably to his Neighbour with his mouth, but in his heart he lieth in wait*, as it is in the Prophet, Jer. 9.8. And when a Man hath done all the good turns he can, and endeavoured to oblige every Man, and not only to live inoffensively, but exemplarily; he is fairly dealt withal, and comes off upon good Terms, if he can but escape the ill Words of Men for doing well, and obtain a Pardon for those things which truly deserve Praise.

But setting aside these, and the like melancholy Considerations; when we are in the Health and Vigour of our Age, when our Blood is warm, and our Spirits quick, and the Humour of our Body not yet turned and sowed by great Disappointments, and grievous Losses of our Estates, or nearest Friends and Relations, by a long Course of Afflictions, by many cross Events and calamitous Accidents; yet we are continually liable to all these; and the perpetual Fear and Danger of them is no small Trouble

ble and Uneasiness to our Minds, and does in a great measure rob us of the Comfort, and eat out the Pleasure and Sweetness of all our Enjoyments; and, by degrees, the Evils we fear overtake us; and as one Affliction and Trouble goes on, another succeeds in the place of it, like *Job's* Messengers, whose bad Tidings and Reports of calamitous Accidents came so thick upon him, that they overtook one another.

If we have a plentiful Fortune, we are apt to abuse it to Intemperance and Luxury; and this naturally breeds Bodily Pains and Diseases, which take away all the Comfort and Enjoyment of a great Estate. If we have Health, it may be we are afflicted with Losses, or deprived of Friends, or cross'd in our Interests and Designs; and one thing or other happens to impede and interrupt the Contentment and Happiness of our Lives. Sometimes an unexpected Storm, or some other sudden Calamity, sweepeth away, in an instant, all that which with so much Industry and Care we have been gathering many Years. Or if an Estate stand firm, our Children are taken away, to whose Comfort and
Advantage

Advantage all the Pains and Endeavours of our Lives were devoted. Or if none of these happen, (as it is very rare to escape most, or some of them) yet for a Demonstration to us that God intended this World to be uneasie, to convince us that a perfect state of Happiness is not to be had here below; we often see in Experience, that those who seem to be in a Condition as happy as this World can put them into, by the greatest Accommodations towards it, are yet as far, or farther from Happiness, as those who are destitute of most of those things wherein the greatest Felicity of this World is thought to consist. Many times it so happens, that they who have all the Furniture and Requisites, all the Materials and Ingredients of a Worldly Felicity at their Command, and in their Power, yet have not the Skill and Ability out of all these to frame a happy Condition of Life to themselves. They have Health, and Friends, and Reputation, and Estate in abundance, and all outward Accommodations that Heart can wish; and yet in the midst of all these Circumstances of outward Felicity, they are uneasie in

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their

their Minds, and as the Wise Man expresseth it, *In their sufficiency they are in streights*, and are as it were surfeited even of Happineſs it ſelf, and do ſo fantaſtically and unaccountably nauſeate the good Condition they are in, that tho they want nothing to make them Happy, yet they cannot think themſelves ſo; though they have nothing in the World to moleſt and diſguſt them, yet they can make a ſhift to create as much trouble to themſelves, out of nothing, as they who have the real and ſubſtantial Cauſes of Diſcontent.

Which plainly ſhews, That we are not to look for Happineſs here; 'tis not to be found in this Land of the Living; and after our Enquiries after it, we ſhall ſee ſufficient Reaſon to take up Solomon's Concluſion, *That all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*; which is much the ſame with that Aphoriſm of David his Father, which I mentioned before, *That Man in his beſt eſtate is altogether vanity*.

But what Happineſs ſoever our Condition in this World is capable of, 'tis moſt aſſuredly full of Uncertainty and Unſettlement; we cannot enjoy it long, and every moment we are in danger of being

being deprived of it. Whatever degree of Earthly Felicity we are possess'd of, we have no Security that it shall continue. There is nothing in this World, but, when we are as sure of it as this World can make us, may be taken away from us by a thousand Accidents. But suppose it to abide and continue; we our selves shall be taken away from it. We must die, and in that very Day all our Enjoyments and Hopes, as to this World, will perish with us; for here is no Abiding Place, *we have no continuing City*: So that it is vain to design a Happiness to our selves in this World, when we are not to stay in it, but only travel and pass through it.

And this is the *First*; Our Condition in this World is very troublesom and unsettled.

2. Our Condition in this World being a state of Pilgrimage, doth imply a tendency to a future Settlement, and the Hopes and Expectation of a happier Condition hereafter. And so the Apostle reasons immediately after the Text; *they confessed that they were Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth; for they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a*

Country; that is, they who acknowledge themselves to be Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth, and yet withal profess to be perswaded of the Goodness of God, and the Fidelity of his Promise, do plainly declare, that they seek another Country. This is spoken of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, who acknowledged themselves to be Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth; and thereby declared, that they sought another Country. Now, says the Apostle, this cannot be the Country from whence they first came, *Ur of the Chaldees, v. 15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that Country from whence they came out, they might have had an opportunity of returning thither.* And therefore he concludes, that the Country which they sought was a better Country than any in this World. *V. 16. But now they desire a better Country; that is, an Heavenly: Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a City.* This plainly refers to that famous Declaration or Promise of God to the Patriarchs of being their God; *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Now certainly

tainly this Promise of God did signifie some very great Blessing and Advantage to those faithful Servants of God above others. This was not made good to them in this World ; for *they confessed, that they were Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth.* Where then is the Blessing spoken of and signified by the great Words of that Promise, *that God was their God?* They met with no such Condition in this World, as was answerable to the greatness of that Promise. From hence the Apostle argues, that they had a firm Perswasion of a future Happiness ; *For they that say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a better Country; that is, an Heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, since he hath prepared for them a City.* And tho the Promise of God to *Abraham* did immediately design the Land of *Canaan*, and the earthly *Jerusalem* ; yet the Apostle extends it to that which was typified by it ; *viz. an Heavenly Country, the Jerusalem which is above, which, at the 10th Verse of this Chapter, is called a City, which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.* And now, seeing God had designed and prepared

so great a Happiness for them in another World, well might he be called *their God*, notwithstanding that they were *Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*; that is, Tho the full Meaning and Importance of this Promise was not made good to them in this World, yet it was accomplish'd to the full in the Happiness which was designed for them in another Life. *And God need not be ashamed to be called their God*; implying, that if nothing had been meant by it beyond this World, this Promise, of God's being *their God*, would have fallen shamefully short of what it seemed to import. And this I conceive to be the true Reason, why our Saviour lays so much Weight upon this Promise, as to pitch upon it for the Proof of the Resurrection; that is, of a future state of Happiness in another World.

There are many Considerations apt to perswade Good Men of another Life after this: As, That Mankind is generally possess'd with this Hope and Perswasion; and that the more wise and virtuous Men have been, the more plainly have they apprehended the Hopes of Immortality, and the better have

have they been contented to leave this World; as if, seeing farther than other Men, they had a clearer Prospect of the Happiness they were entering upon: But above all, that God hath made our Condition in this World so troublesome and unsettled, as if he had designed on purpose to make us seek for Happiness elsewhere, and to elevate and raise our Minds to the Hopes and Expectation of a Condition better and more durable, than any is to be met with in this World; which, considering the Goodness of God, and his gracious Providence and Care of Good Men, is a thing of it self extremely credible.

Having thus, as briefly as I could, dispatched the *Two* Particulars which I propounded to speak to for the Explication of the Text; I should now shew what Influence these Considerations ought to have upon our Lives and Practice.

And if this be our Condition in this World, and these our Hopes and Expectations as to another Life; if we be *Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth*; and look for a better Country, that is, *an Heavenly*; this ought to have a great Influence upon us in these following

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respects, which I shall at present but very briefly mention.

1. Let us intangle and incumber our selves as little as we can in this our Pilgrimage ; let us not ingage our Affections too far in the Pleasures and Advantages of this World ; for we are not to continue and settle in it, but to pass through it. A little will serve for our Passage and Accommodation in this Journey ; and beyond that, why should we so earnestly covet and seek more ?

2. If we be *Pilgrims and Strangers* ; then it concerns us to behave our selves blamelessly and inoffensively, remembering, that the Eyes of People are upon us, and that those among whom we live will be very curious and observant of our Manners and Carriage.

3. Let us be chearful and patient under the Troubles and Afflictions of this present Life. They who are in a strange Country, must expect to encounter many Injuries and Affronts, and to be put to great Difficulties and Hazards, which we should endeavour to
bear

bear with that Chearfulness, as Men that are upon a Journey use to bear foul Ways and bad Weather, and inconvenient Lodging and Accomodations.

4. The Consideration of our present Condition and future Hopes should set us above the Fondness of Life, and the slavish Fear of Death. For our Minds will never be raised to their true Pitch and Hight, till we have in some good measure conquered these two Passions, and made them subject to our Reason. As for this present Life, and the Enjoyments of it, What do we see in them, that should make us so strangely to dote upon them? *Quæ Miseri lucis tam dira cupido?* This World, at the best, is but a very indifferent Place; and he is the wisest Man that bears himself towards it with the most indifferent Affection; that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to stay in it as long as God pleases.

5. We should always prefer our Duty and a good Conscience before all the World; because it is in truth more valuable, if our Souls be Immortal, and
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do survive in another World. For (as our Saviour argues) *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?* And thus St. Paul reasoned with himself, from the Belief of a Resurrection of the Just and Unjust. *For this cause* (saith he) *I exercise my self alway to have a Conscience void of offence both toward God and toward Man.*

Lastly, If we be Sojourners and Travellers, we should often think of our End, and carefully mind the Way to it. Our End is Everlasting Happiness; and the Way to it is a constant and sincere and universal Obedience to the Commandments of God. When the Young Man in the Gospel enquired of our Saviour the way to Eternal Happiness, saying, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit Eternal Life?* His Answer to him was, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* We may easily mistake our way; *For strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leads to Life, and few there be that find it.* Therefore we should often

ten pray to God, as *David* does, *Psalms* 119. 19. *I am a Stranger in the Earth, hide not thy Commandments from me.* And *Psalms* 139. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my Heart; try me, and know my Thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the Way Everlasting.*

A
S E R M O N,

On H E B. XI. 13.

And confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth.

The whole Verse runs thus:

These all died in Faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they, &c.

I Have lately in this Place (upon a particular Day and Occasion) begun to handle these Words: I shall briefly give you the Heads of what hath been

been already delivered, and proceed to what remains. And that which I designed from this Text, was, To represent to us our present Condition in this World, and to awaken us to a due Sense and Consideration of it. It is the same Condition that all the Saints and Holy Men that have gone before us were in, in this World; and we may all of us say with *David, Psal. 39. 12. I am a Stranger with Thee, and a Sojourner, as all my Fathers were.*

It is very frequent, not only in Scripture, but in other Authors, to represent our Condition in this World, by that of Pilgrims and Sojourners in a far Country. For the Mind, which is the Man, and our Immortal Souls, which are, by far, the most noble and excellent Part of our selves, are the Natives of Heaven, and but Pilgrims and Strangers here on the Earth; and when the Days of our Pilgrimage shall be accomplished, are designed to return to that Heavenly Country from which they came, and to which they belong. And for the Explication of this Metaphor, I insisted only upon *Two Things,*
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which seem plainly to be designed and intended by it.

I. That our Condition in this World is very troublesom and unsettled; *They confessed, that they were Pilgrims and Strangers on the Earth.*

II. It implies a tendency to a future Settlement, and the Hopes and Expectation of a happier Condition, into which we shall enter when we go out of this World.

And these I told you are *Two* very Weighty and Useful Considerations; That we should both understand our present Condition in this World, and our future Hopes and Expectation after our Departure out of it; that so we may demean our selves suitably to both these Conditions; both as is fit for those who look on themselves as *Pilgrims and Sojourners* in this World; and likewise, as it becomes those who *seek and expect a better Country*, and hope to be Partakers of a Blessed Immortality in another World.

I. That our Condition in this World is very Troublesom and Unsettled; and
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this is principally intended by the Metaphor of *Pilgrims and Strangers*. Such was the Life of the Patriarchs here spoken of in the Text ; they had no constant Abode and fixt Habitation, but were continually wandering from one Kingdom and Country to another ; in which Travels they were expos'd to a great many Dangers and Sufferings, Affronts and Injuries ; as we read at large in the History of their Travels in the Old Testament. And such is our Condition in this World ; it is often Troublesom, and always Uncertain, and Unsettled : So that whatever Degree of Worldly Felicity any Man is possess'd of, he hath no Security that it shall continue for one Moment.

II. Our condition in this World being a State of Pilgrimage, it implies a Tendency to a Future Settlement, and the Hopes and Expectation of a Happier Condition, into which we shall enter so soon as we leave this World. For so it follows immediately after the Text ; *They confessed that they were Pilgrims and Strangers on the Earth ; For they that say such things, declare plainly that*

that they seek a Country. They that say such things; that is, They that acknowledge themselves to have lived in such a Restless and Uncertain Condition in this World, Travelling from one Place to another, as the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did; and yet pretend to be persuaded of the Goodness of God, and the faithfulness of his Promise; in which He so solemnly declares Himself to be their God; do hereby plainly shew, that they expect some Happier Condition hereafter, wherein that Great Promise of God, will be made good to them to the full. So that He need not be ashamed to have been called their God.

Having handled at large these Two Particulars, I come now to shew what Influence the Consideration of them ought to have upon our Lives and Practices. And if this be our Condition in this World, and these our Hopes and Expectations, as to another Life: If we be *Pilgrims and Strangers in the Earth*, and look for a *better Country, that is, an Heavenly*; this ought to have a great Influence upon us in these following Respects, which I did but

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briefly

briefly mention before ; but shall now Prosecute and Press more largely.

I. Let us Entangle and Incumber our selves as little as we can in this our Pilgrimage : Let us not Engage our Affections too far in the Pleasures and Advantages of this World, because we are not to stay in it, but to pass through it. Upon this Consideration the Apostle St. *Peter* doth so earnestly exhort Christians to preserve themselves from fleshly Lusts, *1 Pet. 2. 11. Dearly Beloved, I beseech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul.* The gratifying of our inordinate Lusts, and our Carnal and Sensual Inclinations, is directly opposite both to the Nature of our Immortal Spirits, and to their great Design and Business in this World. Fleshly Lusts do not only pollute and defile, but even quench and extinguish our Divine part, and do work the ruin and destruction of it ; they sink our Affections into the Mud and Filth of this World, and do entangle and detain them there. In a word, they do wholly indispose and unfit us for that Pure
and

and Spiritual, and Divine Life, which alone can qualifie us for our Heavenly Country and Inheritance. And therefore while our Souls are Sojourning in this World, we should abstain from them, and preserve our selves Unspotted and Untainted by them, as being altogether unuseful, and perfectly contrary to the Laws and Manners of our Heavenly Country. If we wallow in brutish and filthy Lusts, as we pass through this World; our Native Country, when our Souls think to return to it, will reject us and cast us out: when we come to Heaven's Gate, and knock there, expecting to be admitted, and shall cry, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*; He will bid us to *depart from Him, because we have been workers of iniquity. Nothing that is unclean can enter into Heaven.* He who is to receive us into those Blessed Mansions, hath declared it to be his Immutable Resolution, and Decree, that *without Holiness, no Man shall see the Lord.* And therefore, as ever we hope to see God, in that Happy and Blissful State, we must *Cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*; that hav-

ing render'd our selves as like Him as we can in this World, we may be capable of the Blessed Sight and Enjoyment of Him in the other.

And as for the Advantages of this World, let us not pursue them too eagerly. We may take the Conveniences which fairly offer themselves to us, and be content to want what we cannot Honestly have, and without going out of the way of our Duty; considering that we are Travellers, and that a little will serve for our Passage and Accommodation in our Pilgrimage. And beyond that why should we so earnestly covet more, and trouble our selves for that which is not necessary to our Journey? Why should we at any time deal unjustly, to attain any of this World's Goods? They will stand us in stead for so little a while, that we can have no temptation to injure or oppress any Man, to break the Peace of our Consciences, and to wound our Souls, for the attaining of them. If the Providence of God offer them to us, and bring them to our hands, in the use of Honest Diligence, and Lawful Means; as we are not to refuse them,
so

so neither are we to set our Hearts upon them, nor to suffer our Affections to be entangled in them.

The wisest Use we can make of them, will be, to do like those who traffick in Foreign Parts, to consign our Estates into our own Native Country, to send our Treasures before us into the other World, that we may have the Benefit of them when we come there. And this we may do by Alms and Charity. Whatever we spend upon the Flesh, we leave behind us, and it will turn to no account to us in our own Country; but whatever we lay out for the Relief of the Poor, is so much Treasure laid out and secured to our selves, against another day. So our Blessed Saviour assures us, *Luk. 12. 33.* That *giving of Alms is providing for our selves Bags that wax not old, a Treasure in the Heavens that faileth not.*

II. If We be Pilgrims and Strangers; then it concerns us to behave our selves with great Caution, and to live blamelessly and inoffensively; remembering that the Eyes of People are upon us, and that those among whom we Sojourn, will be very pry-

ing, and curious, and narrow Observers of our Manners and Carriage. They that are in a strange Country, are not wont to take that Liberty and Freedom, which the Natives of the place may do, but to keep a perpetual Guard upon themselves, knowing how strictly they are observed; and that they live among those who bear no Good Will to them; and that every Bad Thing we do, reflects upon our Nation, and is a Reproach to the Country to which we belong. *Ye are not of the World;* (says our Lord) *if ye were of the World, the World would love its own: but ye are not of the World; therefore the World hateth you.* Upon this account the Apostle chargeth Christians to be *Harmless, and Blameless, and as it becomes the Sons of God to be, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, among whom we should shine as Lights.* The same Argument St. Peter useth, 1 Pet. 2. 11, 12. *I beseech, you as Pilgrims and Strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts, having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles; that is, Considering that you are among Strangers and Enemies, and therefore ought*

ought to be very careful to bring no Scandal upon your Holy Profession, among those who will be ready to take all advantages against you. Particularly, we who pretend to the same Heavenly Country, must be kind to one another; and whilst we live among Strangers, have no Quarrels amongst our Selves. In a Strange Country, it useth to be a Mighty Endearment of Men to one another, that they are of the same Country, and Fellow Citizens; and this alone is commonly sufficient to unite their Affections, and to link their Interests together. But how little of this is to be seen among Christians? how shamefully do they Quarrel among themselves, in the midst of Enemies and Strangers! as if they had no Relation to one another; and never expected to meet at last in the same Country, and there to live together for ever.

III. Let us be as Patient and Cheerful as we can, under all the Troubles and Afflictions which we meet with in this Life. They who are in Strange Countries must expect to encounter

many Injuries and Affronts, and to be put to great Difficulties and Hardships. Those which are lighter and more tolerable, we must bear with Chearfulness. Upon a Journey Men use to put on all the Pleasantness they can, and to make Sport of all the Inconveniences of the Ways and Weather, and little cross Accidents that befall them; And thus, if we had but the Art and Wisdom to do it, many of the lesser Inconveniences of Humane Life might well enough be play'd off, and made matter rather of Mirth and Diversion, than of Melancholy and serious Trouble.

But there are some Evils and Calamities of Humane Life, that are too heavy and serious to be Jested withal, and require the greatest Consideration, and a very great degree of Patience to Support us under them, and enable us to bear them Decently; as the Loss of Friends and dearest Relations; as the Loss of an Only Son, grown up to be well fixt and settled in a Virtuous Course, and promising all the Comfort to his Parents that they themselves can wish; These certainly are some of the Greatest Evils of this World, and hardest

est to be born. For Men may pretend what they will to Philosophy and Contempt of the World, and of the Perishing Comforts and Enjoyments of it ; to the Extirpation of their Passions, and an Insensibility of these things, which the weaker and undisciplin'd part of Mankind keep such a Wailing and Lamentation about ; but when all is done, Nature hath framed us as we are, and hath planted in our Nature strong Inclinations and Affections to our Friends and Relations ; and these Affections are as naturally moved upon such Occasions, and pluck every String of our Hearts as violently, as extream Hunger and Thirst do gnaw upon our Stomachs.

And therefore it is foolish for any Man to pretend to love things mightily, and to rejoyce greatly in the Enjoyment of them ; and yet to be so easily contented to lose them, and to be parted from them. This is to separate things which Nature hath strongly linked together. Whatever we mightily love, does thereby in some sort become part of our Selves ; and it cannot hang loose to us, to be separated and divorced from us without Trouble ; no
more

more than a Limb that is vitally and by strong Ligaments united to the Body, can be dropt off when we please, or rent from the Body without Pain. And whoever pretends to have a mighty Affection for any thing, and yet at the same time does pretend that he can contentedly, and without any great Sense or Signification of Pain, bear the Loss of it, does not talk like a Philosopher, but like an Hypocrite ; and under a grave Pretence of being a Wise, is in truth, an Ill-natured Man. For most certainly, in proportion to our Love of any thing, will be our Trouble and Grief for the Loss of it.

So that under these great and heavier Strokes, we had need both of Faith and Patience. And indeed, nothing but the firm Belief of *a better Country, that is, an Heavenly*, of another Life after this, and a blessed Immortality in another World, is sufficient to support a Man in the *few and evil Days of his Pilgrimage*, and to sustain his Spirit under the great Evils and Calamities of this Life. But This fully answers all, *That the Afflictions and Sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with*

with the Glory which shall be revealed in us. Nay, that if we bear these Afflictions patiently, and with a due Submission to the Will of God, (especially our Sufferings for his Truth and Cause) it will certainly increase our Happiness in the other World, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

IV. The Consideration of our Present Condition and of our Future Hopes, should set us above the Fondness of Life, and the slavish Fears of Death. For our Minds will never be raised to their true pitch and hight, till we have in some good measure conquered these two Passions, and made them subject to our Reason.

As for this present Life, and the Enjoyments of it; What is it that we see in them that should make us so strangely to dote upon them? *Que lucis miseris tam dira cupido!* This World at the best is but a very Indifferent place, and he is the wisest Man that bears himself towards it with the most Indifferent Mind and Affection; that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to stay in it as long as God pleaseth. And as for Death, tho' the Dread of it be natural, yet why should the Terrors of it

it be so very surprizing and amazing to us ; after we have consider'd, that to a good and pious Soul, it is no other but the Gate of Heaven, and an Entrance into Eternal Life ? We are apt to wonder to see a Man undaunted at the approach of Death, and to be not only contented, but chearful, at the Thoughts of his Departure out of this World, this Sink of Sin, and Vale of Misery and Sorrow. Whereas, if all things be duly considered, it is a greater Wonder that Men are so patient to Live, and that they are not glad of any fair Excuse and Opportunity of getting out of this strange Country, and retiring Home, and of ridding themselves of the Troubles and Inconveniences of Life. For, considering the numerous Troubles and Calamities we are liable to in a long Pilgrimage, there are really but *Three* Considerations, that I can readily think of, that can make this World, and our present Condition in it, in any good measure tolerable to a wise Man ; *viz.* That God governs the World ; That we are not always to stay in it ; That there is a Happiness designed and reserved for us in another place, which will abundantly

ly recompense and make amends to us for all the Troubles and Sufferings of this Life.

And yet it is strange to see how fast most Men cling to Life, and that even in Old Age; how they catch at every Twig that may but hold them up a little while; and how fondly they hanker after a miserable Life, when there is nothing more of Pleasure to be enjoy'd, nothing more of Satisfaction to be expected and hoped for in it. When they are just putting in to the Port, and, one would think, should rejoyce at their very Hearts that they see Land; yet how glad would they be then of any cross Wind, that would carry them back into the Sea again? As if they loved to be tost, and were fond of Storms and Tempests.

Nay, the very best of us, even after we have made that acknowledgment of *David*; *I am a Stranger and a Sojourner with thee, as all my Fathers were*; are apt with him to be still importuning God for a little longer Life; *O spare me a little, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* And when God hath granted us this Request, then we would be spared yet a little longer.

But

But let us remember, that God did not design us to continue always in this World; and that he hath on purpose made it so uneasie to us, to make us willing to leave it; and that so long as we linger here below, we are detained from our Happinefs; *While we are present in the Body, we are absent from the Lord.* This Consideration made St. Paul so desirous to be dissolved, because he knew that when his Earthly House of this Tabernacle was dissolved, he should have a much better Habitation, a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. This was that which made him so full of Joy and Triumph, at the Thoughts of his leaving the World. 2 Tim. 4. 6. *I am now ready (says he) to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which God the righteous Judge shall give me in that day.*

Nay, the Consideration of this (tho but obscurely apprehended by them) did raise the Spirits of the wiser and better Heathen, and fill them with great Joy and Comfort at the Thoughts
of

of their Dissolution. With what Constancy and Evenness of Mind did *Socrates* receive the Sentence of Death? And with what excellent Discourse did he entertain his Friends just before he drank off the Fatal Cup, and after he had taken it down, whilst Death was gradually seizing upon him? One can hardly, without a very sensible Transport, read *Cato's* Discourse concerning his Death, as it is represented by *Tully* in his Book of Old Age. *I am* (says he) *transported with a Desire of seeing my Fore-fathers, those Excellent Persons of whom I have Heard, and Read, and Written; and now I am going to them, I would not willingly be drawn back into this World again; Quod si quis Deus mihi largiatur, ut ex hac ætate repuerascam, & in cunis vagiam, valdè recusem.* If some God would offer me, at this Age, to be a Child again, and to cry in the Cradle, I would earnestly refuse it, and upon no terms accept it. And now that my Race is almost run, and my Course just finished, how loth should I be to be brought back, and made to begin again? For what Advantage is there in Life? Nay rather, what Labour and Trouble is there not in it?

it? But let the Benefit of it be what it will, there is certainly some Measure of Life as well as of other things, and Men ought to know when they have enough of it. O præclarum diem, cum in illud animorum consilium cætumque proficiscar, & cum ex hac turba & colluvione discedam. O Blessed and Glorious Day, when I shall go to that great Council and Assembly of Spirits, and have got out of this Tumult and Sink. And if a Heathen, who had but some obscure Glimmerings of another Life, and of the Blessed State of departed Souls, could speak thus chearfully of Death; how much more may We, who have a clear and undoubted Revelation of these things, and to whom Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel.

V. We should alway prefer our Duty and the keeping of a good Conscience, before all the World: because it is in truth infinitely more valuable, if so be our Souls be immortal, and do survive in another World, and we must there give a strict Account of all the Actions done by us in this Life, and receive

ceive the Sentence of Eternal Happiness or Misery, *according to the things done in the Body, whether they be Good, or whether they be Evil.* For as our Saviour argues concerning the case of denying him and his Truth, to avoid temporal Suffering and Death; *What is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?* When we are tempted by temporal Interest and Advantage, or by the Fear of present Loss and Suffering, to deny or dissemble our Religion, to do any thing that is sinful in any kind, and contrary to our Duty and Conscience; let us ask our selves; What will be the Profit and Advantage of it? What, if for fear of Men, and what they can do to me, I incur the Wrath and Displeasure of Almighty God? This is infinitely more to be dreaded; and these Frowns are a thousand times more terrible, than the bitterest Wrath and cruelest Malice of Men. What, if to preserve this frail and mortal Body, I shall evidently hazard the Loss of my Immortal Soul; and to escape a Temporal Inconvenience, I forfeit Everlasting Happiness, and plunge

my self into Eternal Misery and Ruine? Would not this be a wild Bargain, and a mad Exchange, for any Temporal Gain and Advantage, to lose the things that are Eternal? And for the pleasing of our selves for a little while, to make our selves miserable for ever?

If we confess our selves to be *Pilgrims and Strangers on the Earth*, and are persuaded of the Promises of God concerning an *Heavenly Country*, where we hope to arrive after *the few and evil days of our Pilgrimage* are over; let us not, by complying with the Humours of Strangers, and the vitious Customs and Practices of an Evil World, bar our selves of our Hopes, and banish our selves from that happy Place, to which we all profess we are going.

We pretend to be travelling towards Heaven: but if we *make shipwrack of Faith and a good Conscience*; we destroy our own Hopes of ever arriving at that happy Port. We do not live up to our Expectation of a future Happiness, if the unseen Glories of another World do not raise us above all the Temptations and Terrors of Sense. Our Faith and Hope have not their due and proper

per Influence upon us ; if they do not govern our Lives and Actions, and make us stedfast in the Profession of our Holy Religion, and in the Conscientious Practice of it. *St. Paul* reason'd himself into this Holy Resolution, from the Hopes of a blessed Resurrection. *Acts* 24. 15, 16. *I have Hope*, says he, *toward God*, *that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead, both of the Just and Unjust* : *ἐν τῷ τῷ δὲ*, *For this cause therefore*, *I exercise my self always to have a Conscience void of Offence, towards God and towards Men.*

VI. And *Lastly*, If we be *Sojourners* and *Travellers* in this World ; we should often think of our End, and carefully mind the Way to it. Our End is Everlasting Happiness ; and the direct Way to it is by a constant and sincere and universal Obedience to the Laws and Commandments of God : And this in it self is so plain a way, that a sincere and honest Man can hardly err in it. And therefore we must not suffer our selves to be led and trained out of it, upon any Pretence whatsoever ; not by the Wild-fire of pretended Illuminations and En-

thusiasms; nor by the confident Presence of an Infallible Guide, that will needs shew us another way, and perswade us to follow him blindfold in it. Let us not quit *the Infallible Rule of God's Word*, to follow any Guide whatsoever. *If an Apostle, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Doctrine and Way to Heaven, let him be accursed. He who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life*, when he was consulted with about the Way to Eternal Happiness, knew no other but this. For when the Young Man ask'd him; *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit Eternal Life?* His Answer was, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* 'Tis true indeed, that by reason of our corrupt Inclinations within, and powerful Temptations without, this Way (especially at our first setting out) is rugged and difficult. So our Lord hath forewarned us, telling us, *That strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth to Life, and that there be few that find it.* Therefore we should *strive to enter in*, take great Care and Pains to discern the Right Way, and to overcome the Difficulties of our first Entrance into it;
and

and should often pray to God, as David did, *Psalms* 119. 19. *I am a Stranger in the Earth, hide not thy Commandments from me*; And *Psalms* 139. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my Heart; try me, and know my Thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the Way Everlasting.*

Thus, if we would always have our End in our Eye; it would both be a Direction to us in our Way, and an Encouragement to quicken our Pace in it; there being no more powerful Motive to a good Life, than to be assured, that if we have our Fruit unto Holiness, our End shall be Everlasting Life.

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